

**BRIEFING PAPER**

# **Shifting discriminatory gender norms affecting women in the workplace:**

## **Social media campaigns in Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam**



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# Acknowledgements

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# Acronyms

<b>AI</b>	Artificial intelligence
<b>ALIGN</b>	Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms
<b>FGD</b>	Focus group discussion
<b>ID Comm</b>	Indonesia Communications
<b>IRH</b>	Institute of Reproductive Health (Georgetown University)
<b>IW</b>	Investing in Women
<b>LP3ES</b>	Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial (The Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education and Information), Indonesia
<b>RMIT</b>	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
<b>WISE</b>	Women's Initiative for Startups and Entrepreneurship (Viet Nam)

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# 1 Background

Investing in Women (IW), an Australian government-funded initiative, has promoted women's economic empowerment in South-East Asia since 2016. Between 2020 and 2022, IW supported social media campaigns aimed at those aged 18 to 40 in Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam. These challenged four key norms that had been identified by IW's programme as impeding women's economic advancement.

1. **Caregiving:** A woman's primary role is in the home, caring for children and family members.
2. **Breadwinning:** A man's role is to be the primary income earner for the family.
3. **Gender-based job segregation:** Women and men have distinct skills that are applicable for specific types of work.
4. **Leadership:** Men are better suited to be leaders; women are better suited for supportive roles.

The social media campaigns were intended to:

- **raise awareness** of the negative impacts of these four norms
- **promote well-informed conversations** on topics related to gender and work
- **shift discourse** around the four focal norms and increase public awareness of the ways in which they limit women's economic opportunities.

In some cases, the campaigns also encouraged audiences to engage in specific actions, such as taking part in a private Facebook group or signing up for a course. Research in each country has examined what could be learnt from the experience of these campaigns, particularly lessons that are relevant both for future campaigns in the three focal countries and for wider knowledge and practice.

This ALiGN briefing reflects on learning from these social media initiatives in the three countries, particularly around efforts to shift norms that undermine women's economic advancement. It focuses on the following key questions.

1. Are there specific lessons on how to shift norms around women's economic empowerment (compared, for example, to issues related to health or gender-based violence)?
2. More broadly, what insights does the research on each case contribute to the nascent body of evidence on the use of social media platforms to shift discriminatory and harmful gender norms?

The briefing is based on a review of three research reports that examine the dynamics of social media discussions on gender norms, and the effectiveness of the IW-supported campaigns in each country. We reflect on some of the rich learning from IW's social media campaigns in the context of ALiGN's wider work on gender norms and women's economic empowerment<sup>1</sup> and our research on social media and gender norms.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These include a forthcoming guide to gender norms and women's economic empowerment, and publications such as Chapter 4 of ALiGN's flagship report *Gender, Power and Progress* (Harper et al., 2020) and Marcus (2018).

<sup>2</sup> Examples include Diepeveen (2022) and Washington and Marcus (2022).

The briefing is structured as follows: Section 2 positions the study in the context of previous research on norm-shifting initiatives that use social media, and on online representations of gender norms in South-East Asia. Section 3 outlines the IW campaigns and the methodologies of the three country studies. Section 4 discusses the representation of the four key norms in social media discourse beyond the IW-supported campaigns. Section 5 synthesises evidence of the campaigns' impact and discusses approaches that proved to be effective. Section 6 concludes by synthesising key learning and highlighting directions for future research and evaluation.

## 2 Existing knowledge about shifting gender norms using social media

Efforts to shift norms related to gender and work, whether by organised campaigns and initiatives, or by people posting organically on social media, appear extremely rare.

The use of social media by initiatives to catalyse social and behaviour change is a nascent field, and the evaluation and systematisation of learning from such initiatives even more so. In principle, various features of social media should make it a promising space for intentional efforts to influence and shift norms (Washington and Marcus, 2022). These include the following:

- **Scale** – the ability to reach large numbers of people across geographical boundaries
- **Real-time engagement** – the ability to have a conversation in real-time, and for users to engage and post at their convenience
- **Scope for material that is visually and emotionally appealing**, and for a variety of media (e.g. videos, photos, textual posts), which can increase engagement
- **Informality** – the informal nature and tone of social media can encourage users to share experiences and perspectives
- **Both open and closed communities** – while open communities enable users to discover new content and like-minded others, closed communities provide private, safer spaces for the discussion of sensitive or controversial topics
- **Anonymity** – the ability to use pseudonyms – particularly important in contexts where users might face violent retribution (whether from the state, their families, communities or organised crime) as a result of their posts
- **Accessibility** – though digital divides continue to shape access to social media and digital technology in general, social media can provide a way for people whose mobility is limited to interact with others. For example, in contexts where adolescent girls and young women have

limited independent mobility, or for people living with disabilities that affect their access to in-person social networks, social media can provide a social space with information that they otherwise could not access.

Several other features contribute to the potential of social media as a space to catalyse social norm change. These include the ability to like (or dislike) posts. This enables users to show their approval or disapproval of particular content, and mirrors the social approval associated with conforming to a norm or the disapproval that can result from 'violating' a norm. Social media algorithms, which amplify posts receiving likes, have the potential to help create a groundswell in favour of a positive norm (Petit and Zalk, 2019). It is important to note that these aspects of social media make it a fertile space not only for people aiming to promote equitable gender norms, but also for those who want to reinforce patriarchal norms (Washington and Marcus, 2022).

Recognising the growing use of social media campaigns as part of wider norm-shifting initiatives, in 2022 the Institute of Reproductive Health at Georgetown University (IRH) reviewed evidence of the effectiveness of the use of social media to shift norms that affect health. The diversity of objectives and approaches in these initiatives made it challenging to identify lessons about 'what works'. Further, many initiatives combine digital media components with community engagement, service provision, capacity strengthening and advocacy, and few evaluations isolate the digital media components of this wider suite of activities.

IRH developed a typology of social media functionality to tease out the ways in which social media campaigns could leverage social norms and seek to transform them (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup> Section 6.1 discusses how the IW-supported campaigns used many of these features – and others – to maximise their reach and engagement.

Alongside studies of planned initiatives or campaigns that use social media to shift norms, two other bodies of literature provide relevant insights for this briefing note. First, more studies are now examining the representation of gender norms and inequalities in social media, how different social groups are using social media, and how this helps to reinforce or subtly change gender norms (e.g. Caldeira et al., 2018; Barbovski et al., 2017; Butkowski et al., 2019). Other research, including from South East Asia (Hopkins, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020) has focused on how different groups, such as adolescents and 'mommy bloggers', are using social media.

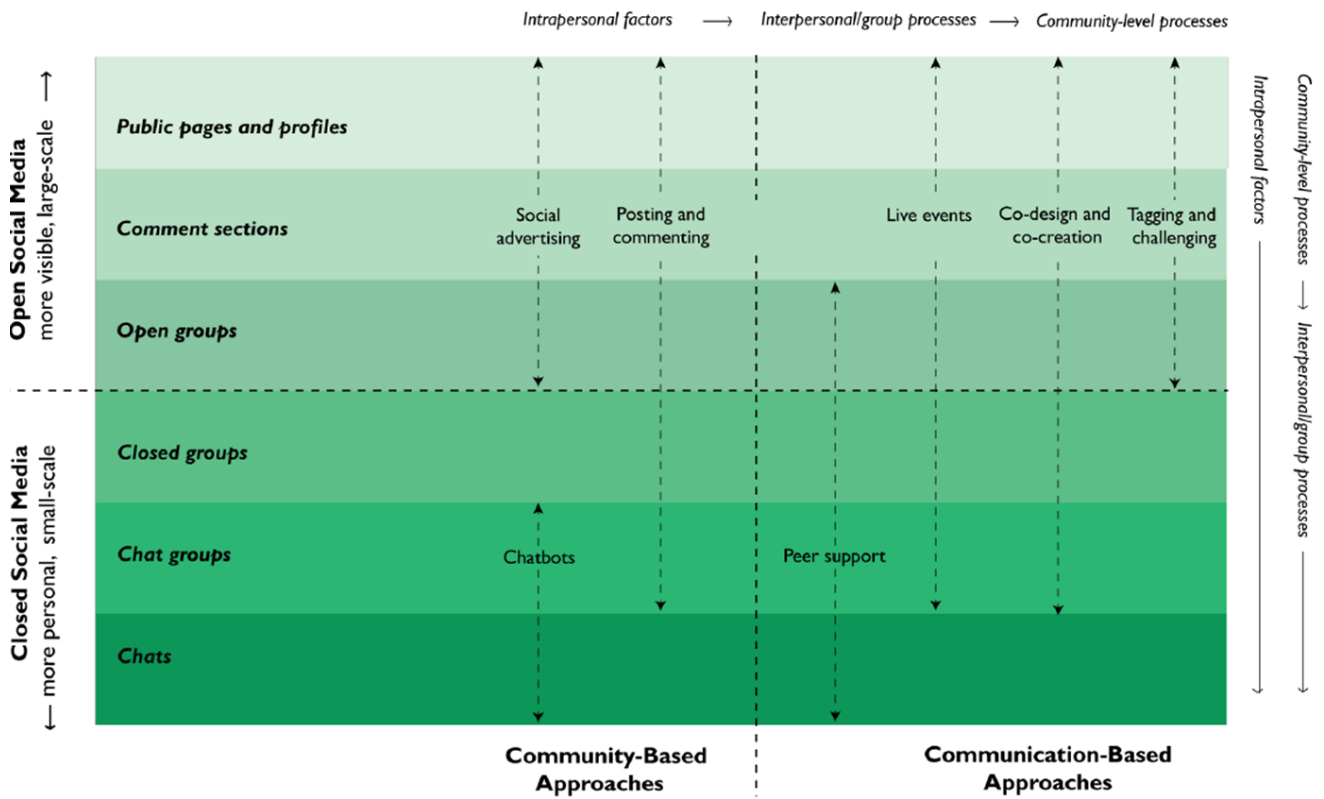
Second, there is a growing body of literature on the strengths, weaknesses and achievements of organic online feminist activism to shift gender norms. Much of this literature has focused on digital activism to prevent violence against women and girls (e.g. Maryani et al., 2018; Washington and Marcus, 2022).<sup>4</sup> While most literature focuses on successes in relation to policy change, rather than direct shifts in gender norms, there are relevant potential lessons for campaigns that aim to influence norms around gender and work, as discussed in Section 6.

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**3** It is important to note, of course, that social marketing initiatives that use social media have a longer history, and social media-based norm change campaigns build on this.

**4** Parahita's (2019) study of digital feminist activism in Indonesia, and Dayrit et. al.'s (2022) study of feminist and gender activism in the Philippines show a wider range of concerns, from bodily autonomy to LGBTQI+ rights, alongside a substantial focus on challenging gender-based violence.

Figure 1: Approaches to shifting social norms using social media



Source: IRH (2022)

One striking gap in the literature on social media and gender norms is women’s economic advancement. Efforts to shift norms related to gender and work, whether by organised campaigns and initiatives, or by people posting organically on social media, appear extremely rare and are not well-documented in the literature.<sup>5</sup> In this context, the social media initiatives supported by IW, and the studies of their effectiveness, represent a unique contribution to knowledge about whether – and how – social media can help to shift gender norms related to women’s economic advancement.

5 One exception is the 2018 case study by Rahmawan et al. on Laki Laki Peduli in Indonesia, part of the MenEngage alliance, which promotes gender-equitable masculinities and men’s greater engagement in care activities. ID COMM (Indonesia Communications) worked with this influential group to discuss norms around unpaid care.



## 3 The IW-supported campaigns and research

Despite having a common overall objective – to influence one or more of the target gender norms – the campaigns’ activities varied considerably within and across the three countries.

### 3.1 The campaigns

Between December 2020 and May 2022 a total of 12 IW partner organisations across Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam ran social media campaigns that aimed to catalyse change in the four focal norms identified by IW as impeding women’s economic advancement.

Table 1 summarises key information about these IW-supported campaigns, which used combinations of content that they posted themselves, and content that they paid others – typically influencers – to post. Their content spanned various types of media, including photos, videos and text, and deployed varied tactics to engage audiences, such as tying content to particular events in the calendar, using competitions to draw in more followers, and amplifying offline activities.

Table 1: Overview of the main social media campaigns (December 2020 – May 2022)

Partner and campaign name/hashtag	Key platforms	Gender norms prioritised	Specific area of focus	Scale of campaign*
<b>Indonesia</b>				
Yayasan Pulih #KitaMulaiSekarang	Instagram Facebook Twitter	Caregiving Breadwinning Leadership	Gendered household roles and divisions of labour; sexual harassment; conflict between couples; challenges facing women in workplace; mental health	98 posts
Rumah KitaB #MuslimahBerkejah	Instagram Facebook Twitter	Caregiving Breadwinning Leadership	Work outside the home is acceptable for Muslim women; women’s empowerment within the framework of Islam	241 posts
ID COMM #BersamaBerperan	Instagram Facebook Twitter	Caregiving Breadwinning	Gendered household roles and divisions of labour	241 posts



Plan Indonesia #GirlsTakeOver (part of #RaisetheBar)	Instagram Facebook Twitter YouTube	Leadership	Girls in leadership roles	447 posts
Magdalene #WomanLead	Instagram Facebook Twitter	Caregiving Breadwinning Leadership	Women's roles in society; issues facing women in the workplace and leadership; balancing work and home-making roles	194 posts
<b>Philippines</b>				
Edukasyon.ph Yaring Pinay	Facebook	Gender-based job segregation	Deconstruct norms and stereotypes around girls' participation in technical and vocational education and training (TVET)	31,451,062 (reach)
QBO Innovation Hub Startup Pinay	Facebook	Gender-based job segregation Leadership	Encouraging women to participate in tech start-ups/ technology industry	3,064,746 (reach)
Oxfam Philippines HomeSquadPh	Facebook	Caregiving Breadwinning	Shift norms on unpaid care work and breadwinning	473,224 (reach)
<b>Viet Nam</b>				
CARE Nhà Nhiều Cột (NNC) Goodvertisings in Viet Nam (GiV)	Facebook YouTube	Caregiving Breadwinning	Gender-equal domestic and workplace roles	9,003,113 reach (NNC) 1,040,485 reach (GiV)
WISE He Can Ở Kia We Trust	Facebook YouTube	Caregiving Breadwinning	Women's economic roles	684 posts with a reach of 2,792,879
ECUE VGEM Vai diễn ở trên vai	Facebook	Caregiving Breadwinning Gender-based job segregation Leadership	Women's and men's roles at home, in the economy and society	400 posts, with a reach of 3,435,507

\* The research reports on which this briefing draws reported different campaign metrics, resulting in the varied metrics used in the column on the scale of each campaign. Although the Indonesia report did not present reach data, it found a total of 1,519,515 engagements with the five campaigns over the research period.

Despite having a common overall objective – to influence one or more of the target gender norms – the campaigns' activities varied considerably within and across the three countries. All campaigns also leveraged organisations' previous online and offline work. Table 2 outlines some of the unique campaign tactics used, while Annex 2 presents available data on engagement with the various campaigns.

**Table 2: Unique tactics**

Campaign	Unique tactics
#KitaMulaiSekarang	Live, interactive discussions on mental health and gender norms
#MuslimahBerkejah	Webinars showcasing authoritative figures in Islam in Indonesia
#BersamaBerperan	Celebrities and micro-influencers originate messages using their own platforms
#GirlsTakeOver (part of #RaisetheBar)	Leadership training and capacity-building for gender influencing for young women
#WomanLead	The use of illustrated narratives to prompt discussions
Yaring Pinay	Posts and conversations linked to promotion of opportunities offered by these organisations, encouraging sign-up
Startup Pinay	
HomeSquadPh	The creation of a private Facebook group discussion space
Goodvertisings in Viet Nam	Multimedia campaign targeting and partnership with the advertising industry
Nhà Nhiều Cột	Leveraging trending issues on gender norms in social media and transmedia*
WISE (He Can and Ở Kia We Trust)	Deconstructing and reimagining cultural products such as proverbs, posters, films to challenge gender norms and stereotypes in society
ECUE (Vai diễn ở trên vai and VGEM)	Platform for conversation between millennials and business leaders around economic choice

\* 'Transmedia' refers to a narrative or project that combines multiple media forms.

## 3.2 The research

Mixed methods studies in each country examined the reach and reception of the IW-supported social media campaigns to understand whether they were influencing gender norms and, if so, how. They also identified approaches that had contributed to perceived changes and those that had not. These studies were not evaluations, but they sought to understand the impact of the campaigns to date, and their potential to contribute to shifts in gender norms that have a negative effect on women in the workplace. In all three countries, analysis of the IW-supported campaigns was set in the context of, and compared with, broader discourse on gender on the four focus norms on social media.<sup>6</sup>

All three studies used a combination of social media listening and primary data collection to understand how the target audience perceive discussion of gender norms online, and their reaction to the IW-supported campaigns. Annex 1 outlines the research methodologies in more detail, the number of posts

<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that the Viet Nam study was a smaller-scale investigation than those undertaken in Indonesia and the Philippines.

examined, interviews undertaken, and the unique elements in each country. In brief, all three of the studies involved the following elements:

1. **Analysis of social media discourse around gender**, with a particular emphasis on the four target gender norms. This involved using social media scraping tools to extract online data from social media sites automatically in all three countries and covered all material identified by these artificial intelligence (AI) tools on related themes. This analysis enabled a comparison of broader discourse on gender norms with the types of content posted by followers of the IW-supported campaigns.
2. **Analysis of IW the reach and uptake of partner campaigns**. This focused on material posted by the campaigns, using analytics such as number of impressions, comments, likes, shares, etc. In Indonesia, the research also involved digital ethnography: an in-depth look at responses to IW campaign materials over several months, which then led to interviews with the most active followers.
3. **Primary data collection from campaign audiences and implementers**. This explored how the campaigns 'landed' with audiences, as well as the perceptions of IW campaign implementation partners of what had worked well and lessons learned. The data were collected mostly through focus groups and interviews with campaign implementers.

## Limitations

It is important to acknowledge limitations when reflecting on changes associated with the IW-supported campaigns. The research focused on campaign activity over a period of a year and a half (at most). While a social media campaign can, occasionally, catalyse rapid change, this is more common in response to acts of violence that inspire outrage than to posts calling for change in other spheres of life (Jiménez Thomas Rodríguez, 2022). It is not possible to track how often particular individuals were exposed to campaign posts or, therefore, to understand the amount or type of exposure that may have contributed to changes in their thinking or behaviour. The metrics used in the three countries were not entirely comparable, and some insights apply to one country only.

Two of the country studies also flagged specific data challenges. Twitter data can be examined more easily by social media listening tools, as a higher proportion of its data is fully open access, while other platforms have more features that limit access to conversations. However, an analysis of discourse based primarily on one platform may be misleading: as the Philippines study found, the types of actors and discourse vary between platforms, and so reliance on data from a single platform may not give a complete picture of social media discourse around gender norms. A more specific challenge encountered by the Philippines team was lack of access to data on dark posts (a type of sponsored post), which meant that their role and effectiveness could not be analysed. Finally, as the research reports have noted, external events may have affected discussions, particularly around women's leadership (e.g. the Presidential campaign in the Philippines).

## 4 Social media discussions about women's economic empowerment

The interest in posts on mental health and wellbeing suggests that integrating material that challenges gender norms into content with a broader focus and appeal may be a promising strategy.

This section discusses social media content on the four focal norms related to women's economic empowerment. It examines how they are discussed on social media (outside of the IW partner campaigns) in the three countries, and the nature of discussion stimulated by the IW partner campaigns. The research reports do not quantify the proportion of posts that endorsed or opposed inequitable gender norms; the discussion is therefore based on the qualitative evidence they present.

It is clear from the discussions that the four norms are closely connected, and that norms about gender roles (unpaid care and domestic work, and breadwinning) often underlie gendered norms about suitable work roles and economic leadership. Discussions that started on one of the latter topics often included content on gender roles.

### 4.1 Norms around unpaid care and domestic work

Unpaid care and domestic work were the most discussed of the four norms in the Philippines and Viet Nam in campaign-related posts, and the second most commonly discussed in Indonesia. In all three countries, both within and outside the IW-partner campaigns, there tended to be a clear division in discussions between those supporting prevailing norms and those challenging them.

In Indonesia and the Philippines, posts supporting norms that consider home-making and care work as female responsibilities were often grounded in perceptions of religious doctrine. In Viet Nam, however, they were framed more in terms of the importance of cultural tradition, including respect for ancestors and rejecting 'unthinking' westernisation.

In the Philippines, much of the content around caregiving and work roles focused on honouring mothers' nurture of their children, as illustrated in Figure 2, and tended to present these roles as natural and biologically based. This content came from a variety of sources, including 'mommy bloggers', some with connections to the church, and some linked to government and political parties. A set of posts (and a theme raised in focus groups in the Philippines) emphasised that home-based work enables both income-earning and unpaid care and domestic work, and saw this as a partial solution to challenges related to the need to earn an income alongside domestic responsibilities. Most of these posts accepted prevailing gender divisions of labour, and were particularly common on threads initiated by 'mommy bloggers', with an emphasis on self-help and ways to manage childcare alongside other roles.

In all three countries, the studies also identified a strong set of posts within and outside the IW campaigns arguing for more equitable sharing of unpaid care and domestic work. In Indonesia, one of the campaign partners (Rumah KitaB) posted primarily from a Muslim feminist lens, initiating discussions and sharing information on religious texts, tradition and women's rights, including in the workplace.

Figure 2: Post honouring the role of mothers (Philippines)



Source: Paragas et al. (2022)

Another set of posts spanning all of the countries, saw shared care and work responsibilities as a practical response to modern life and the economic pressures that require men and women to work. The Philippines study found that societal changes, with the increased participation of women in the workforce and of men in household duties, appeared to be happening alongside the cultural reinforcement of 'traditional' norms around gender divisions of labour.

A third group of posts highlighted the challenges faced by women whose family situation meant they had no choice but to work: these posts were most commonly made by or referred to the situation of widows, divorcees, and/or women whose husbands had lost their job. In these cases, the norm of providing for their children outweighed any stigma related to working outside the home. These posts also highlighted the mental health impacts of having to juggle these multiple roles.

A final group of posts focused on how sharing care and domestic work could contribute to happier marital relationships and family life, and set a good example to children. Figure 3, posted by Laki-laki Baru as part of a campaign by ID COMM, illustrates a post to encourage men to engage more in household work: this was the most popular of ID COMM's Twitter posts, indicating that it resonated with audiences.<sup>7</sup>

In Viet Nam much of the discussion of unpaid care work focused on the intrinsic fairness of equitable domestic gender divisions of labour, rather than the implications for paid work. The campaigns featured positive stories from men who had embraced more equal roles – see Figure 4 for an example from a photo competition run by the Women's Initiative for Startups and Entrepreneurship (WISE).

<sup>7</sup> Focus groups in the Philippines, however, pointed out that some men felt emasculated by undertaking care work, emphasising that the scale of the psychological barriers should not be underestimated.

Figure 3: Popular post encouraging men to share care and domestic work with their wives (original and translation)

**Laki-laki Baru**  
@lakilakibaru

Halo, Bro!  
Ada banyak keluarga yg mempraktikkan relasi saling dukung, antara lainnya dukungan suami pd istri yg meniti karir, hingga selalu support saat istri mengalami hari2 yg berat.

Bro, sebagai laki-laki, bagaimana cerita ini menginspirasi kamu?

-A thread-  
[#BersamaBerperan](#)

**New Boy**  
@laki\_laki\_baru

Hello Bro!

There are many families who practice mutually supportive relationships, including supporting husbands for wives who are pursuing careers, so that they always support their wives when they have hard days.

Bro, as a man, how does this story inspire you?

-A thread-  
[#BersamaBerperan](#)

Source: LP3ES (2022)

Figure 4: Posts from #NewNormalNewMe photo competition



'The pandemic and stories of modern men and women on He Can fanpage made me realize the beauty of sharing in the family. I'm no longer afraid of doing housework, helping my wife take care of the kids, and sharing the moment of happiness with my friends to spread out positivity during this tough time. Every new day is a good day. I am different, you are different. Let's enjoy life to the fullest without worrying about stereotypes and what others think about you' (translation from post accompanying photo).

Source: internal IW project implementation report



There were also conversations at specific times in the calendar related to women's rights or empowerment (International Women's Day, Mothers' Day, or in Indonesia, Kartini Day),<sup>8</sup> and around the passing of a law prohibiting child marriage in the Philippines, highlighting that full-time care and domestic work can limit women's opportunities to escape abusive marriages.

The focus groups in the Philippines (echoed by some of the posts examined in Indonesia) also challenged the idea that in heterosexual, two-parent households, 'traditional' gender divisions of labour were necessarily problematic. Some of the women interviewed argued that, for them, effective empowerment would include the choice not to work and to be able to take care of their children full time. This hints that framing campaign messages with an emphasis on agency and choice may help avoid perceptions that campaigns are telling people how to live their lives.

## 4.2 Breadwinning

In IW's original conceptualisation (see Section 1) the male breadwinner norm was allied closely to (and effectively the converse of) a norm assigning unpaid care and domestic work to women. As the discussion of the caregiving norm shows, posts that discussed norms of male breadwinners specifically tended to take place in this context. In the Philippines, a sub-set of posts focused on sources of financial support, particularly for single mothers. In Indonesia, religious obligations were another prominent theme in discussions, as well as the position of the Koran and different Islamic scholars on women working outside the home. An additional theme that emerged in some posts was that work could offer 'protection' against abusive marriages, if it enabled women to be economically independent.

Both within and outside IW campaigns, a set of posts broadly classified as 'breadwinning' focused primarily on issues women encountered in the workplace, as breadwinners or as contributors to household income. These included the challenges of finding a work-life balance, of juggling paid and unpaid responsibilities, and, in Indonesia, a considerable volume of posts on ways to promote better mental health in the context of work- and home-based pressures. The emphasis on mental health may reflect the mandate of one of the two partners – Yayasan Pulih – which aims to promote a prosperous and resilient society through psychological empowerment and the upholding of human rights and dignity.

Figure 5: Post focusing on women's experience of juggling work and home-based responsibilities



Source: L3PES (2022)



Figure 5 shows Yasayan Pulih’s most liked post. Posts such as these were part of a broader set of activities including webinars and threads inviting people to post about their experiences of handling work-related stresses. The interest in, and volume of posts around mental health and wellbeing suggests that integrating that material challenges gender-inequitable norms into content that has a broader focus and appeal, such as material that focuses on boosting wellbeing holistically, could be a promising strategy to reach a broader audience.

## 4.2 Job segregation

The research found the volume of discussion around job segregation lower than for many other themes. In Indonesia, for example, it was the least discussed norm outside IW campaigns, with content most visible around Kartini Day highlighting examples of women in male-dominated sectors, such as the police, and as entrepreneurs.

In the Philippines, most online discussion focused on women’s rights at work and structural conditions that affect women, with little specific focus on job segregation. Focus group participants expressed divergent views: one group of respondents felt that gender should be irrelevant in job choice and hiring; the other group considered women less able to do some jobs for biological reasons (primarily strength).

Figure 6: Images from WISE’s He Can photo competition (Viet Nam)





*Source: internal IW project implementation report*

In both the Philippines and Indonesia, posts about women in the workplace covered a range of issues, such as the challenges of juggling work and domestic life, and measures that could make workplaces more women-friendly. Posts classified as related to job segregation often covered themes related to paid and unpaid care and breadwinner roles; others featured women business leaders, challenging norms about women as entrepreneurs as well as economic leaders. In the Philippines, few reported conversations discussed gender stereotypes and norms directly around suitable work for men and women. However, two campaigns were successful in encouraging actions that challenged these norms: signing up for webinars about entrepreneurship and technical-vocational training. Internal project implementation reports from Viet Nam also suggest some shifts in perceptions about suitable work for men and women.

### 4.3 Economic leadership

Much of the content and discussion around economic leadership spoke to several of IW's focal norms, highlighting the prejudices and challenges women face in the workplace as a result of underlying patriarchal norms. These include perceptions that women are less effective workers than men, that men are more suited to managerial and decision-making positions, and that balancing paid work with unpaid care and domestic responsibilities limits women's performance in the workplace, and as managers and leaders.

The majority of discussions on women in leadership positions focused on the political sphere. In the Philippines, this reflected, in part, the Presidential election campaign that was taking place during the research, with considerable discussion about the suitability of different candidates. Commentary divided into posts supportive of prominent female politicians and the single prospective female candidate, Leni Robredo, and those that endorsed views such as those expressed by former President Duterte, that high office 'is not for women'. Similarly, political events in Indonesia involving prominent female politicians sparked the greatest discussion of norms around women's leadership.

In all three countries, the IW campaigns posted content about women in economic leadership roles – often in non-traditional sectors (e.g. technology) – highlighted inspiring examples of women entrepreneurs, and called for more women to enter these fields or take up senior roles. In Indonesia the campaigns shared examples of women in economic leadership positions, and asked followers to suggest positive policies to support women in senior positions. The #GirlsTakeOver initiative, for

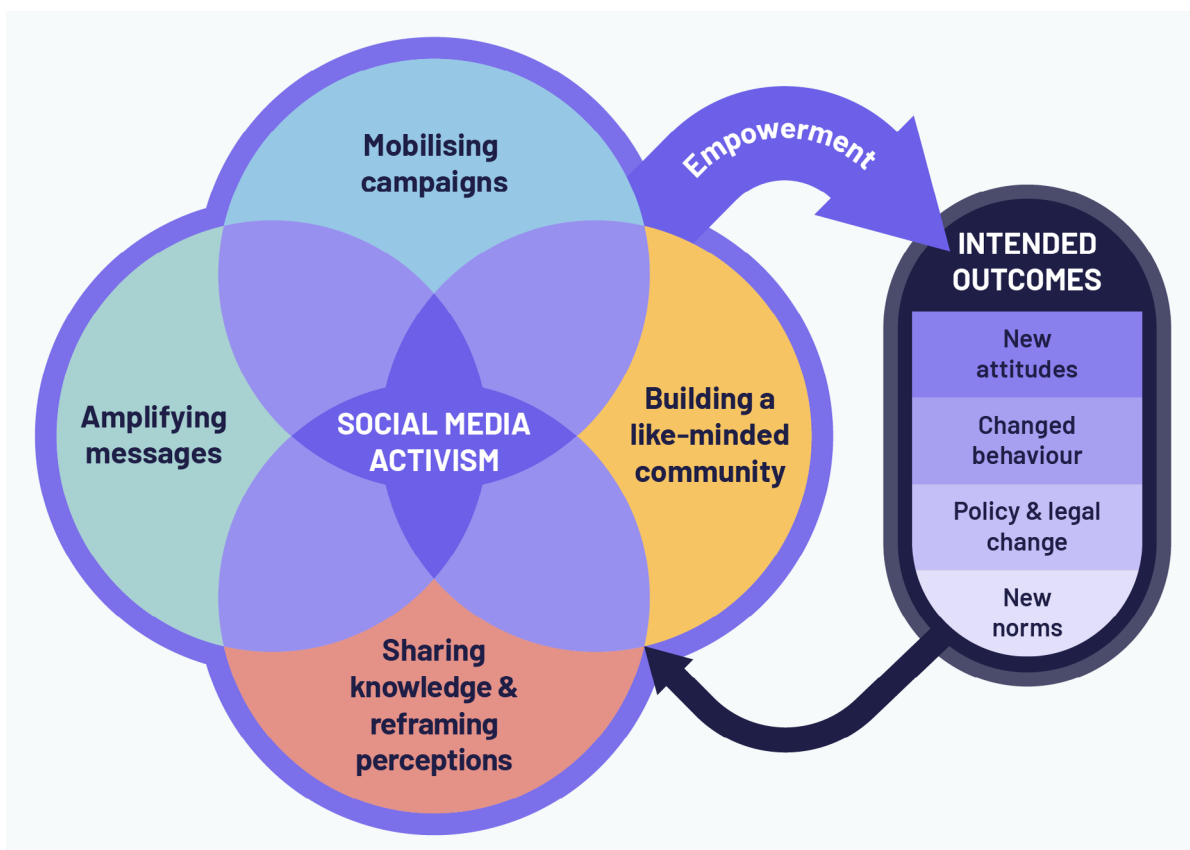
example, showcased girls working with state-owned enterprise leaders for a day. In the Philippines, focus group participants also emphasised the challenges women face in obtaining managerial roles. These include having to work extra hard and argue for promotions, while men are much more likely to perceive promotion and managerial roles as their entitlement after a period of service.

## 5 What impacts have the campaigns had?

‘Even if I don’t receive support from my family, I receive support from other women who are part of the campaign.’

Washington and Marcus (2022) outline four ways in which social media campaigns can catalyse shifts in gender norms (Figure 7). Shifts in any of these areas may be considered building blocks for norm change, a realistic goal for campaigns of 18 months’ duration. In this timeframe it is feasible to seed conversations, to start to mobilise followers, and for some ‘early adopters’ or ‘positive deviants’ to start to change their attitudes or behaviour.

Figure 7: How social media activism can help shift gender norms



Source: Adapted from Washington and Marcus (2022)

The research found evidence of the IW-supported campaigns contributing to the building of like-minded communities, sharing knowledge and reframing perceptions, and there were some testimonies of changes in attitudes and behaviour. A sense of empowerment and greater confidence to speak out emerged as another positive impact. The following section presents illustrative evidence for each of these, based on the qualitative research components of each study. We then discuss how specific social media tactics contributed to the outcomes observed.

## 5.1 Building a like-minded community and sense of empowerment

Respondents in Indonesia and Viet Nam reported that some of the campaigns helped to build a sense of social support, as well as connections to others with similar views, values and experiences. This was important both for self-help and a feeling of 'shared burdens', as found in discussion of Oxfam's HomeSquadPH campaign in the Philippines. The closed Facebook groups were perceived as supportive spaces to help respond to the challenges they faced:

'Even if I don't receive support from my family, I receive support from other women who are part of the campaign.' (Participant in Startup Pinay's Facebook group, Philippines)

'By participating in the campaign, I have made some new friends who make me more confident when raising my voice about gender equality. I can share opinions and knowledge with them, and they give me the mental strength to speak up.' (Female respondent, under 35, Viet Nam)

## 5.2 Sharing knowledge and reframing perceptions, leading to shifts in attitudes

Several interviewees highlighted how gaining new knowledge or participating in campaign activities had changed their attitudes.

'I used to think about women's role in term of kodrat (gender division based on divine order) that cannot be changed. I used to think that as women and housewife you don't have to talk a lot, have opinions, and follow your husband's words. Now my way of thinking is different and I am choosing my "new life" with full awareness. That even though I am mainly housewife I can also earn a living without going outside of the home. Now I am braver to have and to express my opinion. Even though there is still a patriarchal side in my family, I feel I am more equal now and I can accept and respect each other more.' (Female respondent, Indonesia, May 2022)

'I learned from Magdalene that women do not have an expiry date but my parents wanted me to get married at the age of 25. But I feel like even though I am 23 now, I don't think I'm at the right moment to prepare to get married or get married at that age. I'm still pursuing what I want and I believe that there is no "expiry date" for me when I eventually want to get married.' (Female respondent, Indonesia, May 2022)

'I was affected by He Can campaign, and I feel a little changed. Especially after I joined the contest and help spread the gender equality message, I have changed my mind about how gender equality is important to everyone.' (Male respondent, age 26-34, Viet Nam)

'I have a chance to read more stories about what I have not known, have not seen or seen but thought it is a common thing. I no longer feel like I'm on the side-lines. The philosophical knowledge of gender equality is really important for each individual to join hands. It is important to avoid gender discrimination ideology, which has been "normalised" for a long time.' (Female respondent, 18-25, Viet Nam)

It is notable that all of these interviewees expressed their new insights around gender equality, in general, as a change in their core values that would carry over to various spheres of life, not only the workplace.

### 5.3 Shifts in behaviour

Interviewees in both Indonesia and Viet Nam highlighted that participation in the campaigns had led to changes in their own behaviour or that of others with whom they had shared campaign material.

'I used to think that gender equality did not mean much for a person who just did freelancing jobs like me. I also didn't see it as a problem when my sister cleaned the house herself. I used to ask my mom to clean my room because I am a workaholic, and for me, work is the most important thing. ... Therefore, sometimes I implicitly think that, with the support of my younger sister and my mom, there is no need for me to do it. After joining the campaign, I got rid of that kind of toxic thinking and changed my behaviour a lot.' (Male respondent, aged 26-34, Viet Nam)

'In addition to the impact on knowledge of insight, I also have more courage, enthusiasm and confidence. Like now, I am starting to introduce gender equality to the children because I am also teacher at a kindergarten. I started with easy practices such as introducing that all colours are beautiful, that it is okay for boys to cry when they get hurt.' (Female respondent, Indonesia, May 2022)

In Indonesia one of the interviewees explained how her husband made use of material that she had shared:

'So, I often send Instagram posts from Muslimah Bekerja to my husband's DM too. ... several times he [speaker's husband] was assigned to give sermon and he presented material about gender equality in Islam. I am afraid he will probably be labelled as weird in his circle. But I'm really proud.' (Female participant, Indonesia)

By contrast, the Viet Nam study reported that it did not find evidence of conversations that originated within the campaign shifting to non-campaign channels, such as individual profiles or other public groups. This may, however, reflect a limited focus on this issue in the research design, and/or lack of access to content posted in closed groups and online environments (as outlined in Figure 1) or by individuals who maximise privacy settings.



## 5.4 What has contributed to positive change?

The 2022 IRH review of using social media to promote norm change concluded that:

‘there is no single ‘winning formula’: the activity of norms-shifting is context-dependent and needs to be carefully attuned to the target issue and audience while also considering the broader environment for shifting norms online and offline.’ (IRH, 2022: 20)

While this point is well-taken,<sup>9</sup> the three studies identified the following 11 practices as increasing reach or positive engagement. These varied tactics show some of the creativity and diversity of the campaigns in their efforts to catalyse shifts in gender norms over the campaign period. These reflect – but also extend – synthesised knowledge in the gender norms community (as distinct from communications professionals) about effective approaches.

1. **Framing gender equality issues as part of everyday life that everyone encounters, not a ‘fringe’ issue.** The study in Viet Nam found that this was a common technique to stimulate wider engagement. In particular, the campaign wove an element challenging discriminatory gender norms into stories focused on current issues and scenarios familiar to other users, to encourage further discussion.
2. **Framing gender equality as being consistent with religious teachings.** In Indonesia, for example, Rumah KitaB grounded a webinar series on women and work in Islamic teaching, highlighting its consistency with work outside the home. One of Rumah KitaB’s most highly engaged with Twitter posts (131 likes and 327 shares) focused specifically on this topic: *‘The debate over the argument ‘working women’ sometimes never ends. But if you look at the history of the Prophet’s time, women also worked’* ([twitter.com/web/statuses/1384054161923141636](https://twitter.com/web/statuses/1384054161923141636)).
3. **Working with influencers.** As discussed in Box 1, mobilising influencers in Indonesia was extremely effective in extending the reach of, and engagement with, campaigns. The partner who worked most intensively with influencers – ID COMM – prepared campaign information to guide influencers when posting. In the Philippines, Oxfam also worked with relatable micro-influencers (e.g. Saab Magalona, Doc Trina, and other mommy bloggers) to post about care work, a tactic also identified in IRH’s (2022) review as often effective.
4. **Providing factual information.** Several interviewees, particularly in Indonesia and Viet Nam, emphasised that they appreciated posts that shared information. For example: *‘Many times I see Magdalene’s posts that do not just stop at arguments but they display data for example or how the history of women being marginalised, something like that’* (Female respondent, Indonesia). In all

### Box 1: Impact of influencers: Indonesia

Of the 10 posts by IW partners in Indonesia with the most engagement, six were posted by influencers contracted by the campaigns. The posts with the greatest number of likes and replies were generated by just two influencers: psychologist and sexuality educator Inez Kristianti, and Kalis Mardiasih, a writer and activist who campaigns for ‘gender equality in Islamic discourse’.

ID COMM’s top three posts were made by these two influencers as follows:

Influencer	Replies	Likes
Kalis Mardiasih	274	21,828
Inez Kristianti	243	22,093
Inez Kristianti	225	17,206

By comparison, the next most popular Instagram post received 173 replies and 6997 likes.

<sup>9</sup> Consistent with this point, Annex 2 shows the diverse performance of different types of content (e.g. videos, photos, etc.) in the three campaigns in the Philippines, and draws conclusions about the most effective ways to engage audiences.

three countries, and particularly in Viet Nam, webinars and other online talks and events formed an important part of campaign strategies.

5. **Inspirational stories.** Startup Pinay and Yaring Pinay in the Philippines both posted inspirational stories of women in technology and entrepreneurship, which appeared to resonate well with audiences. In Indonesia, Magdalene's campaign highlighted the example of entrepreneur Martha Tilaar, owner of the largest cosmetics business in the country in its posts on leadership and care responsibilities. It highlighted the caregiving roles played by Martha Tilaar's husband, which contributed to her success in business (Figure 8). Stories of this kind could be used more consistently as starting points for conversations about gender segregation or inequities in the field. This means moving beyond praise for 'exceptional' role models, and discussion of what changes would enable similar success for 'ordinary' women.

Figure 8: Inspirational post about role-sharing in support of Indonesian entrepreneur Martha Tilaar



Source: L3PES (2022)

6. **Making substantial use of images.** Social media platforms are increasingly optimised for the sharing of visual content; the capacity of visuals to engage audiences emotionally and intellectually (both 'hearts and minds') has long been recognised (Washington and Marcus, 2022). Data from the Philippines suggest that for two of the three campaigns, photos were the type of content that achieved the highest rates of engagement (see Annex 2). But many of the campaign posts used images (and made strategic use of small amounts of text) to engage audiences and attempt to start conversations.
7. **Leveraging the reputation of a known and respected organisation.** Respondents in Indonesia commented that sharing posts from respected organisations helps others take the information seriously. For example, one interviewee reported sharing posts from PLAN Indonesia, which were trusted because of their good reputation for 'on-the-ground' work locally.
8. **Timing posts to coincide with points in the year.** In Indonesia, for example, some of the campaign elements that received the most engagement were timed to coincide with events that had a gender focus, e.g. International Women's Day or Kartini Day. Some campaigns in Indonesia also used holidays and celebrations to focus on gender norms around unpaid care - using divisions of labour in holiday preparations (e.g. at Eid) as an entry point.
9. **Creating closed discussion groups.** Two of the campaigns in the Philippines (Edukasyon.PH and Oxfam) created closed Facebook groups. These provided spaces where members could share their views more freely. Closed groups fulfil this solidarity-building function (Washington and Marcus, 2022), but can also be a springboard towards more public engagement (as shown in



Figure 1).

10. **Using diverse approaches.** Initiatives in all three countries found online competitions helpful in building engagement. The Philippines study, for example, found that online competitions and challenges on Oxfam's HomeSquadPH Facebook group stimulated more genuine and rich comments and engagement on care work in the group's discussion threads. In all three countries, a combination of online and offline events helped maintain interest and bring new followers to campaigns. While none of the studies were able to assess the impact of these activities quantitatively, project completion reports from Viet Nam and evidence from Plan's campaign in Indonesia suggest these were important in bringing depth and engaging a wider set of audiences.
11. **Sustained campaigns and social media presence.** Data from the Philippines show a steady upward trend in the number of followers as the campaigns progressed. This points to the importance of establishing and maintaining a long-term presence. Where this presence already exists, working with partners with a solid reputation and established social media presence (as with some of the campaign partners in Indonesia) is likely to contribute to reach and engagement.

## 5.5 Pushback and toxic online environments

Audiences in all three countries highlighted pushback when they posted content that challenged gender norms and stereotypes. Resistance was framed through two main sets of claims about gender equitable norms, and/or people who espouse them.

**First, they were seen as contrary to tradition and culture.** The studies reflect perceptions that equitable gender norms were contrary to cultural traditions, often with divisions along generational lines. In Viet Nam, advocates of gender equality were seen as promoting westernisation uncritically and creating extra burdens for husbands and brothers who were believed to already have important tasks at work and school. In Indonesia, some advocates reported that they were seen as contradicting religious teachings. For example:

'Please stop criticising men who don't do housework; it's so frustrating. Vietnamese culture will be like America, with modern feminism of all kinds. When a woman chooses a husband who must have money, she still asks him to clean the house and wash the dishes. During the party, men have to worship their ancestors already, that's why women need to cook.' (Online comment, Viet Nam)

Some younger respondents also reported receiving patronising comments such as '*you're too young to understand how the world works*'.

**Second, they were seen as selfish, ungrateful or 'rebellious'.** Supporters of gender equality were painted as selfish, or ungrateful to their parents, with claims that they 'only think about themselves and their wishes, without considering the family and society' (Viet Nam). A specific concern was that if women did not get married and give birth, family bloodlines would end, and nobody would worship ancestors and deceased parents in the future. Similarly, two female interviewees from Indonesia highlighted pushback from their families. One observed that that she was called a rebel every time she tried to raise gender equality issues with her parents. The other reported:

'when I try to discuss gender issues with my own family, it always leads to debate and my sister and my mother will usually end it with the word "halah". Meaning end of discussion or they ask me to stop the conversation. If I discuss

it with old men like my father or my uncle, they will certainly deny it and object straight away.'

Two other forms of pushback were identified in Viet Nam as common ways to silence messages criticising the dominant gender norms: labelling pro-gender equality claims as too extreme and the case for supporting them as outliers; and claiming that pro-equality posters are interfering and telling others how to live their lives.

The groups identified as most likely to respond negatively to posts supportive of gender equality in general or challenging any of the four focal norms were:

- men who perceived that gender equality would erode their social status and advantage (Viet Nam)
- women who could pay for domestic help and/or who did not need to work and for whom the constraining impacts of the focal norms were less pressing (Viet Nam)
- supporters of established norms and practices, who were often a part of the older generation (Indonesia and Viet Nam)
- those with a specific understanding of religious teaching (Indonesia).

Reflecting this, the reports made several recommendations for intergenerational dialogues, aiming to shift discriminatory norms.

Interviewees across the three countries highlighted that fears of trolling or 'bashing' (Philippines) deterred them from posting:

'I am angry, but I don't dare to argue, they are too toxic.' (Female respondent, 18-25, Viet Nam)

Some Indonesian interviewees stated that the risk of toxic responses led them to mainly share content from the campaigns or post materials supportive of gender equality within networks of like-minded friends, and/or to choose the least controversial material to share outside their trusted networks. They also reported that they tended to avoid sharing content on gender equality with people that they knew to hold conservative views, unless they were prepared to engage in debate.

This may be one reason for the high proportion of 'passive' engagement (likes, shares), compared with responses that engage more deeply with the content (as Annex 2, Figure A.1 shows, replies constituted only 1.9% of responses, while likes constituted 87% of responses).<sup>10</sup> Other than highlighting toxic online environments and mapping stakeholders whose content tends to reinforce inequitable gender norms, the Philippines report does not discuss backlash against pro-gender equality posts directly.

Some respondents in Indonesia reported that they sought to avoid the label feminist, which they felt was viewed negatively, although a small number of younger respondents embraced a feminist identity. Others reported that personal attacks and hateful comments derailed debates from their focus on gender equality. Similarly, campaign organisers in Indonesia reported that they intentionally developed positive posts to try to avoid negative reactions. Closed discussion groups, such as Oxfam's HomeSquadPH Facebook group, may represent a partial solution, in that they provide a safe space for to discuss controversial issues. Addressing misogynistic online environments, of course, requires concerted action beyond the scope of individual campaigns, such as strengthening regulation, much more effective content moderation and sanctions for repeat posters of misogynistic material (Washington and Marcus, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> Data that disaggregate types of responses are only available for Indonesia.

## 6 Conclusions

This section returns to the questions posed at the start of this briefing, synthesises insights from the three country studies, reflects on some key knowledge gaps and proposes ideas for a future research and evaluation agenda. In each sub-section we identify some emerging propositions, which could be tested through further initiatives and research.

### 6.1 Shifting norms about women's economic empowerment

Both the campaign posts and discussions outside IW campaigns show the close connections between the four focal norms and broader norms related to gender equality. This suggests that the strategy of tackling several of IW's focal norms within a campaign, and interweaving this strategy with more general pro-gender equality content, is more reflective of lived realities and of normal discourse than single-issue campaigns. However, more evaluation of contrasting campaign approaches would be beneficial (see Section 6.3).

Both within and outside IW partner campaigns, gender equality in unpaid care and domestic work was almost universally the topic that generated most discussion, with responses both in favour of and against more equitable divisions of responsibilities.<sup>11</sup> Defenders of women having primary responsibilities for care and domestic work were generally focused on religious or 'traditional' cultural values. Given this, it would be beneficial to assess the effectiveness of pro-equality campaigns with a traditional religious or cultural grounding.

Posts arguing for greater equality in unpaid care and domestic work focused on questions of intrinsic fairness and the benefits to children of fathers' greater involvement in care and domestic work. Relatively few of these discussions considered the impact of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities on women in the workplace (even where the original campaign post did so). A few raised the experiences and perspectives of single mothers, who have limited options for the redistribution of their care and domestic responsibilities other than within their wider family networks.

The analysis both of IW campaigns and of broader discourse found very little distinct discussion of the male breadwinner norm beyond its clear relationship with the discussions of gender roles around unpaid care work. This may reflect an effort to build on widely accepted positive cultural values related to masculinity (such as supporting one's family economically), by emphasising the positive gains from shared care and breadwinning.

While some of the campaigns engaged audiences in challenging the norms and stereotypes that underpin job segregation, many conversations gravitated towards general workplace conditions and barriers that women face in their workplaces. However, some project implementation reports – outside the scope of the three country studies – show evidence of shifts in norms around suitable jobs for men and women. These may reflect efforts to engage across diverse work settings and sectors.

On leadership, while some campaigns (e.g. Rumah KitaB, Yasayan Pulih, QBO) focused on women's leadership in the economic sphere, much of the commentary generated by the posts focused on their political rather than economic leadership. However, the focus groups in the Philippines show that

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<sup>11</sup> The data from social media listening in Indonesia found more posts on job segregation outside IW campaigns, but, as the research report makes clear, it is doubtful that the AI tools classified all posts correctly.

women, particularly those in management roles, face misogyny, as well as an expectation that they must prove themselves worthy of these roles, while men in the same companies are often promoted purely on the basis of their length of service. The discussions stimulated by several of the campaigns in Indonesia highlight how an expectation that women will shoulder both paid work and unpaid care responsibilities creates huge mental and logistical demands.

Given the difficulties of stimulating conversations about women's economic leadership directly, it would be worth exploring other approaches to challenging stereotypes and norms that limit women's involvement in leadership and non-traditional roles. These might include more general efforts to promote support for gender equality and to showcase inspirational stories online and/or pair these with offline activities. As suggested by the Yasayan Pulih and Magdalene campaigns in Indonesia, a broader framing around mental health and wellbeing in the workplace may help to engage a wider audience.

### Emerging propositions

- Consider weaving material on gender and work into more general discussions focused on gender equality as examples.
- Encourage campaign organisers to moderate actively and attempt to steer conversations. For example, discussions about the fairness/unfairness of gender roles could be extended to include the impact on women's ability to work outside the home, and their advancement at work.
- Recognise that some building blocks of norm change may be among the most valuable immediate outcomes of campaigns: strengthening individuals' courage and resolve to engage in discussion on, and challenge, gender inequalities; and strengthening virtual support networks.
- Consider finer segmentation of messages to engage a wider range of audiences more fully and/or to ensure that campaign messages speak to diverse lived experiences.

## 6.2 Social media as a space for norm-shifting campaigns

The three country studies suggest that social media was – at least partially – living up to its potential to reach large numbers of young people, and engaging them with content about IW's focal gender norms. Taken together (and in many cases individually), the campaigns achieved reasonable reach and engagement levels (Annex 2). As discussed in Section 5.4, they used a range of creative techniques to do so. At the same time, analysis from the Philippines indicates that for two of the three campaigns, audiences saw an average of just one campaign post, which may not be enough to sustain interest and engagement.

Together, the three studies revealed several challenges to the use of social media to catalyse shifts in gender norms.

**A crowded social media space.** The available analytics data suggest that the campaigns reached between 0.5 million and 31.4 million people.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, the available data (Philippines only) indicate quite varied engagement rates: 1.71% (Edukasyon) to 4.32% (QBO) and 13.58% (Oxfam).<sup>13</sup> Without sufficiently high reach and engagement, the investment made in social media campaigns may not provide value-for-money and may not, therefore, justify the resources expended.

<sup>12</sup> Reach figures were: 470,000 for Oxfam's HomesquadPH campaign and 31.4 million for Edukasyon's Yaring Pinay campaign in the Philippines, with the campaigns in Viet Nam reaching between 1 million and 3.5 million people.

<sup>13</sup> Industry standards suggest that engagement rates of between 1% and 5% are to be expected, with the rates generally declining as the number of followers increases (Sehl and Tien, 2023). This may help explain the higher engagement rates for Oxfam's campaign than for QBO and Yaring Pinay.

Although reach and engagement can be boosted in various ways (e.g. through paid posts, working with influencers, incentivising relatable organic posts, and seeding content through different organic communities and networks, such as parenting groups), campaign content must still compete with other materials. The Philippines study suggested maximising reach in the early stages of campaigns through paid posts and the retargeting of viewers who have engaged previously, which could help to build sustained engagement. This could help to overcome, at least in part, in-built biases within algorithms and the architecture of social media, which can reduce the likelihood of pro-gender equality posts being recommended other than to people who have previously liked similar content (Diepeveen, 2022; Noble, 2018).

**The nature of online discourse.** The type of content users post and respond to reflects their varied motivations for posting online: outrage about particular instances of (or generalised) misogyny, seeking and sharing information, or looking for a support network. It also reflects the norms of online behaviour. These norms can encourage aggressive, combative responses, particularly in contexts of perceived injustice or violation of social norms (Rost et al., 2016), but also can seek to de-escalate tension, or promote positive or constructive content (boyd, 2014, cited in Allison, 2018). Reflecting on the effects of these varied norms of online behaviour, the Philippines study raised the question of the suitability of social media as a space for the encouragement of reflection and dialogue, highlighting two different types of common content that may, in different ways, limit discussion:

‘Social media is not a place for more nuanced discussions on relatable everyday experiences of women. What tends to be highlighted in social media are experiences on the extreme end (i.e. domestic abuse, outright misogyny).’  
(Campaign organiser, cited in Paragas et al., 2022: 152)

Another set of responses were encouraging but bland, according to one interviewee (a campaign implementer):

‘For the most part, it's been positive [like], "I feel you" [or] "Go lang".’

This highlights a challenge for norm-shifting efforts: online networks can function as a source of support while doing relatively little to challenge accepted positions or thinking. This is consistent with a key concern about social media as a space for catalysing substantive change that can be summarised as ‘many clicks but little sticks’ (Lim, 2013). A combination of on- and offline activities may help to drive deeper change, but this needs to be tested empirically.

**Levels of engagement and self-censorship.** As noted in Section 5.5, fear of aggressive responses led interviewees in all countries to self-censor online, and to share ‘controversial’ content, such as content on gender equality, only with trusted friends and family members. It may also explain why audiences engaged with many of the IW-partner campaigns through relatively ‘safe’ responses, such as likes, that were far less likely to attract pushback than comments. This said, the Viet Nam study found that content that ‘pushed boundaries’ sometimes stimulated a more vibrant response.<sup>14</sup>

**Targeting content to reach a broader set of audiences.** Demographic data from Indonesia show that the most engaged campaign respondents were mostly young women, who posted frequently on gender equality topics. However, the qualitative data discussed in Sections 5 and 6.1 suggest that the campaigns also contributed to greater awareness of, and commitment to, gender equality – indicating that they were reaching audiences with lower levels of prior engagement with gender issues. Campaigns

<sup>14</sup> Probing whether campaign participants were adopting exaggerated positions that went beyond their actual beliefs was outside the scope of the research, but could be investigated in future studies through digital ethnography.

(such as He Can, Viet Nam) and the engagement of male feminist influencers (such as Laki Laki Baru, Indonesia) were able to reach young men and catalyse changes in their self-reported behaviour. These experiences suggest that developing more tailored content, designed explicitly to engage men as active participants in conversations, particularly on care issues, could be a promising future strategy.

Norms theory also suggests it is important to **reach and seed change among 'reference groups'** (people whose opinions matter to, and influence, norms among the key 'target group' for the campaigns: young urban adults). These may be family members, friends, religious figures, etc. Both the Indonesia and Viet Nam studies suggested that older family members were often most resistant to changes in gender norms. Where reference groups have low levels of social media use, offline activities may prove more fruitful than efforts to shift norms via online activity.

#### Emerging propositions

- Social media is a relevant space in which to attempt to shift gender norms, though it is often more effective at sharing information and raising new ideas than promoting discussion and deliberation.
- A sustained online presence, leveraging existing reputation, seeding content in organic communities and engaging influencers can all help to increase reach and engagement, which underpin effective campaigns.
- To maximise effectiveness, a mixture of online and offline activities should be used to maintain interest and build engagement from different audiences. These could include intergenerational dialogues.
- Formative research is important to understand the most resonant framing in particular contexts and for different groups. Regular review of analytics on reach and engagement against benchmarks, and adjusting campaign strategies where necessary, can help achieve maximum effect.
- It would be helpful to explore further whether 'controversial' content that pushes boundaries leads to deeper engagement, or if it simply provides a space for the expression of polarised views.

### 6.3 Future research agenda

The three studies revealed a number of important knowledge gaps that future studies and evaluations could address.

**Quantifying the extent of endorsement of, or opposition to, prevailing gender norms.** Some studies, including Dehingia et al. (2021) and Iskarpatyoti et al., (2017) have used AI tools to quantify the extent to which social media discourse supports or challenges particular norms. The study by Dehingia et al. found that after a period of 'training' the programme, the tools used could identify misogynistic tweets with 96% accuracy.<sup>15</sup> Analysis of this kind could help to identify both stickier norms and those that are more amenable to shifting, and this could, in turn, underpin tailored communication activities.

<sup>15</sup> This estimate is based on a comparison of human and AI coding. Though binary categorisations of this kind cannot reflect the full spectrum of sentiments, and different readers will view messages differently, this is nonetheless an impressive degree of accuracy. By contrast, the 2017 study by Iskarpatyoti et al. found that the overall AI coding of sentiments around age-discordant transactional sexual relations was only consistent with human coding in 41% of cases.

**Strengthening the evaluation of online norm-shifting initiatives and the continued testing of the effectiveness of different approaches.** The body of evidence on the effectiveness of social media campaigns to catalyse gender norm change is still nascent. Three specific ways in which this can be strengthened are as follows:

- Greater analysis of shifts in attitudes or behaviour (as indicators of norms) among campaign followers. If possible, compare campaign followers with social media users who do not recall exposure to specific campaigns as a counterfactual group.<sup>16</sup>
- Evaluation of the relative effects of different strategies on reach, engagement and attitudes or behaviour. Is there, for example, any added value achieved through combined online and offline activities; or by posing general pro-gender equality content alongside focused messages on workplace-related norms? This is also important to help identify the most cost-effective campaign approaches.
- Greater segmentation of audiences to understand how campaigns may influence people with different backgrounds and lived experiences.

**Encourage more inter-disciplinary studies, combining insights and tools from social science and from the fields of marketing and communication.** This could enhance the quality of content analysis and insights about communication patterns, and ensure depth in understanding of processes of change in gender norms. Future studies could adopt these approaches to enable a deeper understanding of support for different norms and the effectiveness of campaigns on different platforms (including TikTok, which was not examined by any of the studies).

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<sup>16</sup> Forthcoming IW survey research has quantified overall patterns of change in gender norms over the project period in all three countries among a representative sample of people aged 18-40, showing where shifts in wider society have occurred; findings on change among campaign followers could be compared with broader trends.



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# Annex 1: Methodological details

Annex Table 1: Summary of methodological approaches in each country

Country	Social media listening				Interviews and focus groups		Unique elements
	Platforms	Approaches and tools	Period of analysis	Number of posts examined	Campaign implementers	Audiences	
Indonesia	Twitter Facebook Instagram YouTube	Content and sentiment analysis with Drone Empirit software. Digital ethnography	Posts made between 1 April 2020 and 31 May 2022	2,480,486 non-IW partner posts 1,519,515 engagements with IW partner posts	4 FGDs covering 19 participants	2 FGDs, 3 interviews (total of 10 respondents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sentiment analysis</li> <li>• Digital ethnography</li> <li>• Quantitative analysis of demographics of social media users posting on gender norms</li> </ul>
Philippines	Twitter Facebook YouTube	Content and discourse analysis using Crowdtangle, SNSData scrape and YouTube Tools. Analytics of reach, impressions and cost per result during different campaign phase	Posts made between June 2020 and May 2022	921,924 non-IW partner posts 430 IW partner posts	3 FGDs (all participants female)	6 FGDs (all participants female)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of ‘norm networks’</li> <li>• Analysis of campaign conversion (taking specific actions)</li> <li>• Analysis of the effectiveness of paid media</li> <li>• Comparison of trends in content posted, and main actors over time</li> </ul>
Viet Nam	Facebook	Content and discourse analysis including co-occurrence of key gendered terms	IW partners’ campaigns up to end December 2021; non-partner posts in May-June 2022	Top 100 posts on partner pages 51,107 posts on non-partner pages	11 interviews (7 women)	14 interviews (7 women, 7 men)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of co-occurrence of gendered terms</li> </ul>

# Annex 2: Metrics of campaign reach and engagement

**Table A2.1 Engagement with different types of social media material: Philippines**

Campaign	Overall highest engagement rates	Highest engagement rates for organic posts	Highest engagement rates for paid posts	Worst performing content type
Home Squad PH (Oxfam)	Shared posts (10.59%) Online events (9.34%) Videos (8.88%)	Shared posts (10.77%)	Videos (15.06%)	Status updates by text Surveys
Startup Pinay (QBO)	Videos (5.83%) Photos (4.06%) Links (3.98%)	Videos (6.40%) Photos (3.33%)	Photos (6.83%) Links (5.26%)	Live video Other
Yaring Pinay (Edukayson)	Photos (2.77%) Links (1.35%)	Very little organic engagement so no metrics available	Photos (3.11%) Links (1.35%)	Video Text Live video

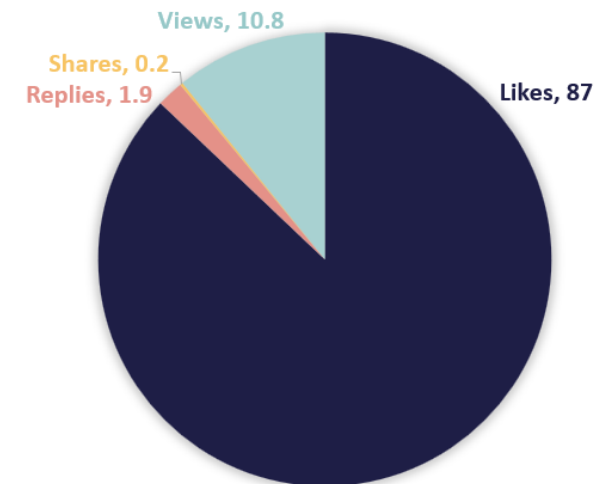
Source: developed from Paragas et al. (2022)

## Types of engagement

The Philippines study generated data on campaigns’ reach, respectively: 0.36% of the potential Facebook audience (Oxfam), 1.33% (Yaring Pinay) and 11.35% (QBO). Similarly average engagement rates ranged from 1.71% (Yaring Pinay) to 4.32% (QBO) and 13.58% (Oxfam). The analytics indicate that users saw posts from Yaring Pinay on average three times, but only one post on average from QBO and Oxfam.

The Indonesia research classified the types of engagement with campaign posts, revealing the huge dominance of likes over other types of response (Figure A.1).

**Figure A.1: Distribution of types of engagement (%) IW partner campaigns in Indonesia**



**About ALIGN**

ALIGN is a digital platform and programme of work that is creating a global community of researchers and thought leaders, all committed to gender justice and equality. It provides new research, insights from practice, and grants for initiatives that increase our understanding of – and work to change – discriminatory gender norms. Through its vibrant and growing digital platform, and its events and activities, ALIGN aims to ensure that the best of available knowledge and resources have a growing impact on harmful gender norms.

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