



Understanding changing social norms and practices around girls' education and marriage

Lessons learned and emerging issues from year 2 of a multi-country field study

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Key messages

- Progressive national laws and information campaigns against early marriage are having a positive impact, yet early marriage remains prevalent, driven by socio-cultural and economic forces that influence norms and practices of parents and children alike.
- More girls are benefiting from education, particularly at primary level, largely due to national policies on free and obligatory schooling as well as greater awareness of the social value of educating girls; however, this progress has not always carried through to secondary level, and early marriage or pregnancy remains a key cause of school drop-out among girls in some countries.
- Gender roles, relations and expectations within marriage remain rigid, prescribed by discriminatory norms guiding behaviours of men and women and by deep-seated notions of honour and shame, both of which contribute to a 'stickiness' in social norms around gender and ideals of masculinity and femininity.
- Supportive families are critical in providing gender equitable opportunities and expectations for girls; positive role models in the community also offer transformational potential.
- To be most effective, efforts to change social norms operating on the 'demand' side must be accompanied by parallel efforts to open up opportunities on the 'supply' side in terms of broad-based, integrated approaches; otherwise, significant progress for girls will be inhibited.

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Acknowledgements

This paper draws insights from the country reports, briefings and presentations from the second year of field research on social norms and adolescent girls in Viet Nam, Nepal, Ethiopia and Uganda, which were shared and discussed at the second annual meeting of the Adolescent Girls research teams at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London from 23-26 September 2014. The author wishes to acknowledge and extend thanks to the following ODI colleagues for their thoughtful comments and useful inputs on successive drafts of this paper: Caroline Harper, Head of Social Development Programme; Fiona Samuels, Research Fellow; and Rachel Marcus, Research Associate

1 Context and background

1.1 Exploring the multiple capability domains of adolescent girls

Poised at the intersection between childhood and adulthood, adolescent girls face unique challenges to the full development and exercise of their capabilities. And yet they may also hold the key to positive development outcomes that could reverberate across future generations. Investments to empower adolescent girls are increasingly recognised as critical to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty. For such investments to have maximum impact, more evidence is needed to make adolescent girls more visible in policy and planning processes and to identify the multiple social and cultural forces that shape their experiences and conditions of life. Among such forces, social norms are powerful influences that need to be better understood.

A multi-year, multi-country study has been exploring the complex ways in which adolescent girls' capabilities are shaped and/or constrained by gender discriminatory social norms, attitudes and practices, and how other overlapping and intersecting experiences of poverty, deprivation and exclusion serve to intensify and perpetuate vulnerabilities. The study is being conducted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in partnership with national research teams in Viet Nam, Nepal, Ethiopia and Uganda, commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) as part of a flagship programme on Transforming the Lives of Girls and Young Women. The field research is part of a broader stream of work that includes a literature review investigating the latest thinking on social norm change and understanding gender norms (Marcus and Page, 2014b), with the two streams designed to mutually inform and reinforce each other.

The first year of field research (2012-13) was informed by the capabilities approach to development, underpinned by conceptual work on gender justice and entitlements. The research provided an overview of adolescent girls' lives in our case study countries, capturing the status quo and complex interplay of forces that shape their wellbeing and capabilities in five domains: education, household and family relations; economic empowerment /access to resources; physical safety and health; psychosocial wellbeing; and political/civic participation. Table 1 summarises key lessons learned from the first year of research.

Box 1. Lessons learned from year 1 research

- **The depth of interconnectedness between and among the different capability domains** was revealed through fieldwork on girls' lived experiences. This is of vital importance for policy considerations, as it points to the need for intersectoral collaboration around integrated approaches to the promotion of adolescent girls' capabilities.
- **Significant gaps exist between policy and practice**, with clear weaknesses in local-level implementation of national laws, policies and programmes to promote gender equality and gender-responsive services. This calls for greater investment in local-level implementation and enforcement capacity.
- **Norms change at uneven pace and to different degrees.** While some norms seem to have shifted considerably (especially around education, in line with the greater opportunities now available for girls), others remain particularly 'sticky' and resistant to change (notably around domestic roles and expectations, gender-based violence, 'son bias' in its varied dimensions, and early marriage). This implies that different strategies may be required to promote positive change in different domains, and that supply and demand factors may both need to be taken into account.

- **Changes in norms and practices do not always occur in parallel.** Some behavioural patterns might change faster than the attitudes governing them, or vice versa (for example, there is evidence of increased parental investment in their daughters' education even though sons remain more important to them as a source of financial support in older age). This suggests that attitudes as well as practices must be taken into consideration in programme and policy design.
- **Processes of social norm change are often fraught with conflict.** Some segments of society or even individuals may hold different perceptions of existing social norms and the need for change or continuity. It is therefore important to identify and work with various 'gatekeepers' who are influential in either promoting or inhibiting positive change, as well as to seek example of 'positive deviance' to understand and support the factors that influence individual choices to adopt such positive changes.
- **Key sources of deprivation resonate with seminal feminist theoretical constructs** (around, for example 'public and private' domains, the 'honour and shame' complex, 'production and reproduction', and 'patriarchy'). It may be useful, therefore, to revisit such constructs through the lens of adolescence, including exploring how 'adolescence' is defined (or not) locally, and with particular reference to social norms. These could then be made more explicit within both conceptual frameworks and programmes of action for moving forward on capability development for adolescent girls.

1.2 Honing in on marriage and education

Building on findings from year 1, the second year of research (2013-14) has aimed to provide a more in-depth understanding of if, how and why discriminatory gendered social norms are changing so as to better inform relevant policies and programmes. The focus is on norms and practices around marriage and education, which are pivotal in shaping girls' opportunities and capabilities, now and throughout their life course. Country field sites were selected from some of the same areas where year 1 research was conducted, but research was more concentrated to capture an in-depth understanding of changes in social norms.

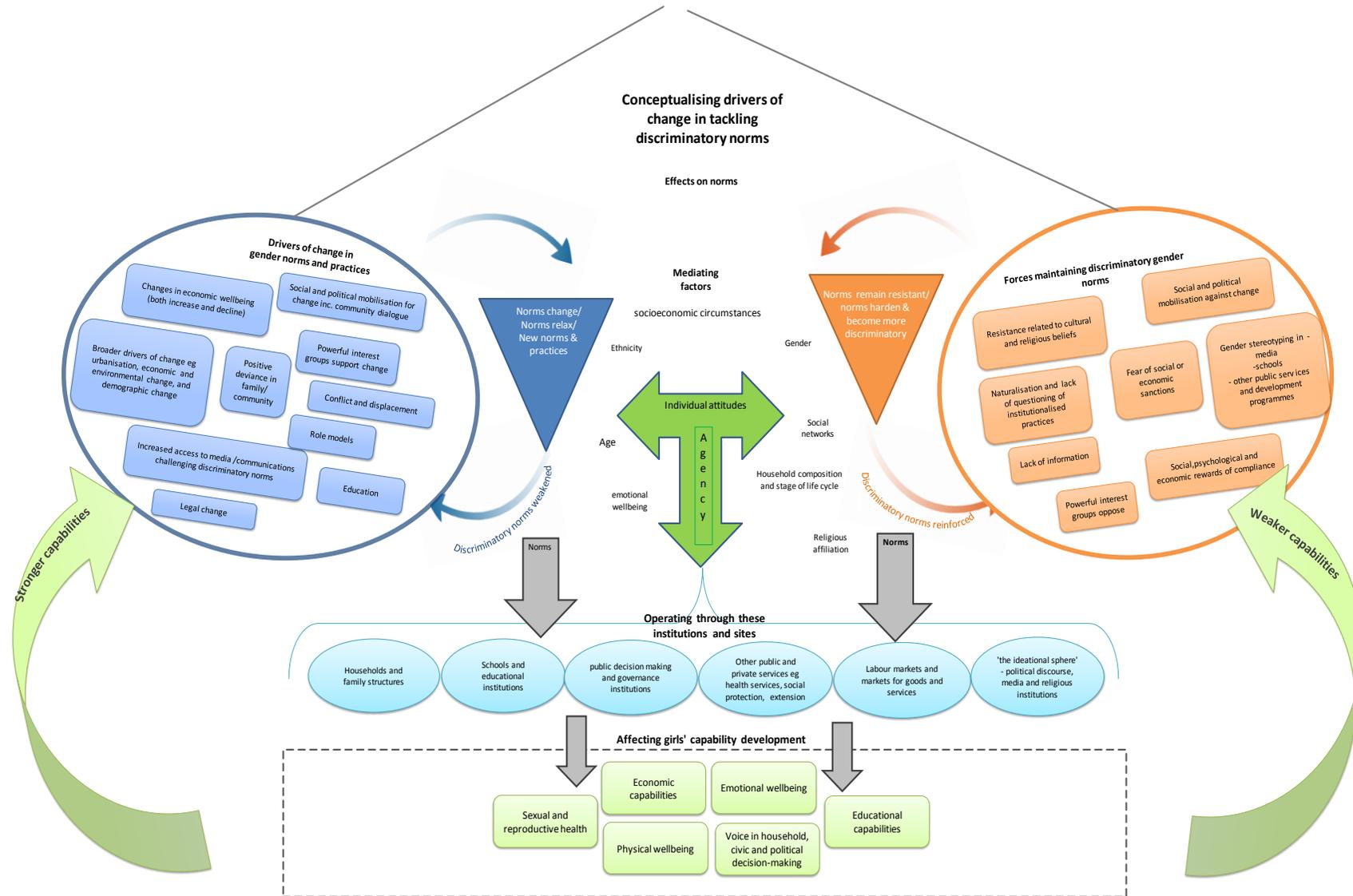
- **Viet Nam¹:** Research was conducted among the Hmong ethnic group in Ta Lung commune, in the Meo Vac district of Ha Giang province, situated in northern Viet Nam, near the border with China. The district is recognised as the country's Hmong homeland and is one of the poorest areas in the province.
- **Nepal:** Research was conducted in two village development committees (VDCs) (one rural and one semi-rural) in Doti, a district in the Far Western region of Nepal. Doti was selected due to its least developed status and high levels of gender disparity.
- **Ethiopia:** Research was conducted among communities in three rural *kebele* (wards) in Amhara regional state (West Gojjam, South Wollo, and North Gondar), one of Ethiopia's largest but most disadvantaged regions, situated in the north-western and central part of the country.
- **Uganda:** Research was conducted in two rural and multi-ethnic sub-counties (Kityerera and Baitambogwe) in Mayuge district, in the East Central region, selected because of high poverty rates, poor social indicators, and high prevalence of early marriage and teen pregnancy.

Fieldwork in all four countries used qualitative methods to elicit information, perspectives and experiences from married and unmarried adolescent girls and boys, family and community members, local officials, ethnic or religious leaders, and national stakeholders. Research tools included: focus group discussions, in-depth individual interviews and key informant interviews, as well as innovative approaches such as intergenerational pairings (daughter, mother, grandmother) and historical timelines to capture changes over time; marital network analysis to explore perspectives of adolescent spouses, their parents and in-laws; community mappings to provide contextual background; and 'outlier' case studies to provide more in-depth information (see section 3).

Field research findings were enriched through analysis of written documentation at national and district levels and guided by a conceptual framework that illustrates how both the drivers of positive change in social norms and forces maintaining discriminatory gender norms may be mediated by a variety of factors, operating through a variety of institutions and sites to affect adolescent girls' capability domains (see figure 1). The conceptual framework has built on and refined the model guiding year 1 research, drawing on our more recent analyses of gender norms and of processes by which norms change (Marcus, 2014b and Marcus and Harper, 2014).

¹ All further references to findings from Viet Nam refer to findings from among the Hmong study participants

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Source: Marcus 2014

2 Lessons learned from key findings

Country-specific findings provide rich detail on the range of social norms around girls' education and marriage, how they are manifested in each context, and the forces that either inhibit progress or contribute to positive change. Full results can be found in the detailed reports produced by each country team (see section on references). The points below were highlighted as some of the key cross-cutting issues that emerged when the country teams met to share and discuss results.

2.1 Significant change, but ongoing challenges

Positive changes

Research findings in all countries reveal a number of significant changes in norms and practices around girls' education and marriage. In most countries, ages at marriage appear to be rising, often as a function of national laws establishing 18 as the minimum legal age of marriage, but also as a result of information campaigns highlighting the negative health effects of early marriage. In *Viet Nam*, for example, strong community messaging about the advantages of later marriage – specifically that older girls (aged 18 or 19) are better able to handle the workload of marriage and bear 'larger and healthier babies' – appear to be well understood by the Hmong study participants. In *Nepal*, the age gap between spouses has decreased, from an average of 18 years in the mothers' generation to between three and seven years now. In *Ethiopia*, there has been an increase in the average age at marriage in the study communities, from 4-12 years in the previous two generations to 10-plus years in the current generation, and almost all study participants were aware of the legal age of marriage.

Traditional forms of marriage, such as marriage by abduction and kidnapping, are diminishing in frequency in *Viet Nam*, for example, along with harmful initiation practices (such as female genital cutting in *Ethiopia*, which was traditionally seen as a prerequisite for marriage in our study communities). Arranged marriages, though still occurring in all countries, appear to be giving way to more individual choice of partner, while marriage payment systems and practices, though still evident, are changing somewhat in nature and importance.

At the same time, in all four countries, more girls are benefiting from education, particularly at primary level, largely due to expanded opportunities and national policies of free and obligatory schooling. In *Nepal*, children are enrolling in school at a younger age since there are more elementary schools closer to home. Moreover, families and communities seem to be more aware of the social value of educating girls as messages conveyed by national policies and programmes are assimilated. In all cases, the dynamics of change and persistence are context-specific and the interplay between norms on early marriage and investment in girls' education vary considerably even between communities of relatively close geographical proximity, as was found in both *Ethiopia and Uganda*.

Remaining challenges

Despite this progress, a number of challenges and obstacles persist. Early marriage remains prevalent – sometimes driven underground in the face of national laws which prohibit it, as in the case of *Uganda*, where it manifests itself in the form of loose cohabitation arrangements (referred to as 'marriage through the window') that offer limited security or protection to the young girls involved. Elopement in *Nepal*, which is becoming more common as couples react against lack of parental consent for 'love matches', is also seen to be contributing to early marriage. In *Ethiopia*, despite trends towards a later age at marriage and agreement that 18-

20 was the most appropriate age for a girl to marry, the majority of study participants had, in fact, been married before the age of 18 – and some as young as 10, though they expressed regret at this.

Traditional forms of marriage by abduction do still occur, with examples found in *Viet Nam*. Arranged marriages persist, and are the norm in *Nepal*. Polygamy remains a common form of marriage in *Uganda*, where male identity and prestige is linked to having many wives, either officially or unofficially, in what is referred to as ‘modern polygamy’; it is also on the rise in *Nepal* among certain communities. Marriage payments, whether as outright bridewealth, which continues to fuel parental desires to marry off daughters, or as ‘compensation’ to parents for individually contracted unions (both of which were witnessed in *Uganda*), continue to hold sway and were seen by a number of study participants as a form of ‘commoditization’ of women. In *Ethiopia*, bride price is paid at the time of betrothal, making it very difficult for girls to refuse to go through with the marriage.

Gender roles, relations and expectations within marriage remain quite ‘traditional’ in all study countries, typically prescribed by discriminatory norms guiding behaviours of men and women. A woman’s value, as measured by her fertility – and particularly giving birth to sons – remains a constant. The threat or reality of sexual and gender-based violence remains high in some countries. Access to sexual and reproductive health information and services for adolescent girls was variable, ranging from extremely limited in *Uganda* to more readily available in *Ethiopia*, where positive trends were noted. In *Viet Nam*, the vast majority of Hmong women – whether they are married too young and against their will or voluntarily as young adults – are unable to control their own fertility; some are also vulnerable to gender violence within marriage, often fuelled by alcohol. In *Ethiopia*, while most participants agree that domestic violence is decreasing, abuse continues, particularly in relationships where the woman has no access to an independent income, and becomes socially isolated due to economic reliance on her partner, who is often much older.

In education, progress at primary level has not, for the most part, been matched by progress at secondary level, except in *Viet Nam*, where attainment of lower secondary school has become the norm. Secondary schools are often distant from homes and cash-strapped families struggle to meet school-related expenses (including boarding in distant towns); in addition, many parents are concerned about the risk of gender-based violence while their daughters are at school and while travelling to and from school, and are reluctant to allow them to take such risks. Girls in all study countries continue to drop out of school either as a result of early marriage or pregnancy (the latter particularly evident in *Uganda*), because of lack of accessible secondary schools, or because of continued parental reluctance to invest in higher education for girls.

‘Son bias’ remains a strong feature of most of our study communities, with parents often more willing to invest in their sons’ education as they will carry on the natal lineage, while daughters will belong to the clans or lineages of their in-laws after marriage. In *Viet Nam*, for example, parents say ‘*Without a son, later on when we grow old, we’ll be miserable; there will be no one to look after us. We must have a son, so that later on when we grow old and die, when a grave is built for us, a door is made outside the grave.*’ Since girls become members of their husbands’ families (physically and spiritually), they not only receive a smaller share of family resources (education, leisure time and inheritance) but, mindful that their biggest contribution to their parents’ wellbeing is their short-term labour in their natal homes, girls leave school when they are told to leave and work when they are told to work. In *Nepal* too, there is evidence of son bias in household expenditure on education, with boys being sent to English-medium private schools that are perceived to provide a better-quality education than the Nepali-medium government schools where most girls go. In all of the study countries, girls’ relatively larger contribution to household labour for their families was seen to restrict their ability to study.

Generally, the educational options for married girls or adolescent mothers are extremely limited. In *Ethiopia*, for example, many young married girls reported that they were unable to continue their education without the support of their husbands, which they received relatively rarely, and in *Uganda*, pregnant girls or young mothers are discouraged from attending school for fear they will set a ‘bad example’ for others. *Nepal*, on the other hand, reports a relatively recent trend of parents-in-law occasionally sending their daughter-in-law to school, something which may be negotiated as part of the marriage arrangements, reflecting the desires of the husband or parents-in-law, as well as the bride. Table 2 summarises from an analytical perspective the main positive changes and ongoing challenges captured by the fieldwork.

Table 1: Overview of positive changes and ongoing challenges

Positive changes	Ongoing challenges
Some social norms for girls are ‘relaxing’ compared with previous generations, including greater mobility linked to wider economic opportunities (most countries)	Discrimination between girls and boys of the same generation continues, and son bias persists (most countries)
Legal frameworks have been developed and awareness of laws against early marriage, leading to national trends towards a later average age at marriage in most countries	Child marriage remains common in remote areas (Nepal); some girls are marrying even earlier than their mothers (Viet Nam); early marriage is still widespread in rural areas (Uganda); and laws are sometimes not upheld – either violated or circumvented (all countries)
There are fewer arranged marriages/more individual choice of partner (Uganda; Ethiopia; Viet Nam; Nepal)	Boys still have more power to choose their marriage partner (Nepal); marriage by abduction persists (Viet Nam); and unstable informal marriages leave girls without legal protection (Uganda)
Some shifts point towards the articulation of more egalitarian relations within marriage in all countries	Male authority within the household is still strong ‘ <i>What a man says, the woman says also</i> ’ (Uganda) and often backed up by violence or the threat of violence (high levels of domestic violence in Uganda, Viet Nam)
Greater social value is being placed on girls’ education and educational opportunities for girls are expanding, particularly at primary level (all countries)	Many girls are still dropping out as the education cycle progresses (all countries); limited secondary opportunities exist near to the home (all); the quality of learning environments may be low (Uganda); heavy domestic workloads limit time for study (Ethiopia; Viet Nam; Nepal); communities are not convinced that an educated girl makes a better marriage partner (Uganda; Viet Nam; Nepal); and there are few opportunities for schooling of married girls or adolescent mothers
Some examples of local role models are emerging and becoming more accessible	But resistance is also evident against what are seen as ‘aggressive’ political activists or over-educated women (Uganda); successful women who have left the village do not necessarily come back (Uganda); and lack of educated women limits role model possibilities (Viet Nam; Nepal)

2.2 Non-linear and ‘messy’ nature of norm change and its consequences

Our field study findings bear out the premise reflected in our conceptual framework and in the emerging literature on social norms, which is that processes of norm change are often ‘complex, messy and non-linear’, with consequences that can be both positive and negative.

Dialectical effects of drivers of change

A key finding is that drivers of social norm change can have both positive and negative impacts as well as unintended consequences. Moreover, one norm may be affected in contradictory ways by a variety of different factors. Key drivers that contribute to changes in social norms around gender include national laws and policies, broad-based socioeconomic transformation, new forms of information and communications technology (ICT), and the rise of market-based transactions and expansion of public places (including schools) where young people can meet and mingle. Specific programme interventions were also identified as factors driving change.

The following are examples of the complex and often ‘dialectical’ nature of the influence and impact of such factors on gendered norms and practices.

- **Promotion of rights:** In *Ethiopia and Uganda*, the promotion of children's rights and women's rights as a matter of national policy has had many positive effects in terms of the articulation of strategic gender interests for adolescent girls and women. At the same time, however, it sets up significant forces of resistance and backlash – primarily among men – who see it as a threat to their power and authority as husbands and fathers. In both countries, a number of respondents, particularly men, were highly critical of the focus on 'rights', claiming that the discourse was 'eroding tradition', encouraging disobedience, and resulting in confusion and tensions across generations and between men and women. This is seen by some to be fuelling a total abandonment of household responsibilities by men, as well as increased tensions, and sometimes violence, within the household.
- **New information and communications technologies:** In all study countries, young people have more opportunities to encounter each other – for example, at markets or at school – as well as increasing access to new ICTs such as mobile phones (which allow them to contact and get to know each other without their parents' knowledge) or videos and TV (which expose them to new perspectives and forms of social interaction that are unknown in their community). While some of the changes involved are seen to be positive in terms of young people's greater autonomy and expanded perspectives, others are more ambiguous.

Many adult study participants *in Uganda* decried the 'pornography' they saw being transmitted on videos from 'the West' and felt that the increased ability for boys and girls to mingle on their own in places such as trading centres where such videos were shown was leading to a destruction of moral values and behaviours. In *Viet Nam*, TV is showing girls a world very different from their own, but most girls are watching romantic dramas, which may well build up unrealistic expectations of married life, while mobile phones are giving them previously unheard of levels of contact with boys, leading to new forms of interaction. In *Nepal*, easier communication via mobile phones has brought some degree of empowerment and increased agency; but on occasion has facilitated young girls' elopement and early marriage, which in turn threatens development of their other capabilities.

- **Socioeconomic change:** Many of the rural study communities, though marked by underlying poverty, are undergoing significant processes of socioeconomic change and transformation. In *Uganda*, for example, the expansion of sugar plantations with wage labour opportunities for young men is giving rise to a cash economy and expansion of trading centres at the expense of subsistence agriculture. While new opportunities for wage employment are generally a positive development, in this context, they are contributing to the rise of informal and highly unstable cohabitation arrangements between young men and adolescent girls as they seek prematurely to establish themselves as separate households. It is also contributing to transactional sex: as one key informant interviewee put it, '*With roads passing through, restaurants and hotels established in trading centres, many landing sites with fishing and smuggling activities, there is a lot of money circulating in the district. This money has to move around and one of the things this money is buying is sex.*'

In *Viet Nam*, better road links to local markets have brought the first-ever opportunities for wage labour among the Hmong, even for girls, who often sell wine and vegetables at these markets to make money to buy their own clothes. Several adolescents noted that they were delaying their marriage specifically because they were able to buy things for themselves only while they remained unmarried. At the same time, however, these markets are sometimes also reported to be the venue for kidnappings. In *Ethiopia*, migration to the Middle East is opening up new economic opportunities for some girls to early marriage and pressures to migrate to support their families. In *Nepal*, on the other hand, male migration was common, but was not found to be a strong driver of change in gender norms.

- **Education:** While all country studies emphasise that girls' increased participation in education has mostly had positive impacts – including, as in *Ethiopia*, the important role of school clubs in empowering girls – some identify contradictory effects that can paint a picture of one step forward/two steps back. In *Viet Nam*, while Hmong girls are increasingly likely to stay in school up until lower secondary level, very few reach upper secondary; they tend to marry earlier than their mothers did due to greater opportunities that schools facilitate to meet the opposite sex. In *Uganda*, schools can either promote empowerment for girls or reproduce the existing inequitable gender norms and practices through gender-biased teaching and

learning processes or gender-based harassment of girls, including by male school officials. As one group of embittered parents in Uganda complained: *‘Male teachers have turned them into sex objects, to the extent of infecting them with HIV. When we complain, the culprit teachers are merely transferred.’*

A complex interplay between norms and practices

The interplay between ‘injunctive norms’ (what people say ought to be done) and ‘empirical norms’ (what people commonly do in practice) is highly complex and can have varying consequences for girls. In some cases, local norms around marriage are beginning to change, with some study respondents expressing ideals of more egalitarian relations within the household, which are beginning to shape reality – as in **Ethiopia**, where such injunctive and empirical norms are beginning to converge. In other cases, however, it appears that consensus around the injunctive norms of what men and women should bring to marriage remain strongly intact, even in the face of changing ‘empirical norms’ of behaviour, creating a disjuncture between the ideal and the reality and contributing to rising tensions within the household. In **Uganda**, for example, in the context of widespread poverty and unemployment among men, more women are taking on economic roles and thus encroaching on the sole breadwinner status of the husband; this, in turn, seems to be fuelling domestic violence and leading to situations where men, feeling like ‘empty trousers’, abandon all household responsibilities.

So too, injunctive norms which emphasise that girls should wait for marriage to have sexual relations can co-exist with empirical norms that most girls are not waiting: this can, among other things, make it more likely that parents will impose early marriage to avoid their daughters engaging in premarital sex, as seen in **Uganda** and **Ethiopia**, thus contributing as a driver of early marriage.. It can further contribute to unwed girl mothers being stigmatised and treated as ‘scrap’ (in **Uganda**) or to the reinforcement of traditional ‘*gaido*’ contracts (in **Ethiopia**), which allow for very early betrothals and marriage but establish contractual safeguards against consummation of the marriage before the girl is ready. In **Nepal**, parents who fear the rising phenomenon of ‘love matches’ or elopement also seek to marry daughters off as early as possible to avoid the stigma this is seen to bring to the family.

2.3 A particular ‘stickiness’ around gender norms

Notions of honour and shame

Deep-seated notions of honour and shame, connected to social mechanisms designed to control the female body, sexuality and behaviour, seem to undergird some of the ‘stickiness’ around gender norms and behaviours. In some cases, these are intertwined with and reinforced by religion and connected to strongly held views on women as the ‘repositories’ of culture whose behaviour reflects on the social group as a whole, and therefore must be strictly controlled.

Restrictions on women and girls’ free movement outside the home and interactions with the opposite sex for girls before marriage (and for women after marriage) were evident to different degrees in all country studies. Some study participants linked these restrictions to fears of loss of virginity or unfaithfulness to the husband and couched them in terms of ‘injunctive’ norms or behaviours that were expected of the ‘good girl’ and ‘good woman’. Such norms have been internalised as part of the socialisation process for girls who fear the consequences of transgression.

- In **Viet Nam**, girls say *‘We feel comfortable when obeying parents.’* They understand that non-marital relationships are strictly taboo, particularly for girls, and that were they to break the rule that *‘no girl is to like a guy first’*, they might find their marriage options limited by the court of public opinion as their neighbours say, *‘This girl is this and that, I won’t marry her.’*
- In **Nepal**, parents express fear that their daughters would get ‘spoiled’ by playing outside of the house or going to public places where they *‘may flirt with boys’*. Such fears also influenced parental decisions to withdraw their daughters from school at a certain age.
- In **Uganda**, some parents explained their desire for early marriage for their daughters as a protective measure against pregnancy outside of marriage; among Muslim communities in particular, it was

considered important to marry off a girl either before, or as soon as, she started menstruation, backed up by a social taboo against adolescent girls shedding menstrual blood in their parents' home.

- In *Ethiopia*, conservative norms around girls' sexuality also contribute to early marriage. As arranged marriages become less common, a culture of dating is starting to emerge. However, young adolescents who choose to date tend to hold secret meetings for fear of bringing gossip and shame to their family.

Ideals of the good woman and good man

Ideals of femininity and masculinity over the life cycle, as expressed by our study participants, underscore the many ways in which strongly held cultural values around gender determine attitudes and behaviours for the 'ideal' woman and man. As such, they reflect both the actual social relations and division of labour within a household as well as the expectations about what men and women should bring to marriage and the family.

Ideals of the 'good woman' include one who 'respects' her husband and in-laws; who provides many children, particularly sons; who sticks close to home and takes care of all household chores – providing food, maintenance and nurture – and who is modestly dressed (i.e. wearing traditional clothing). These ideals are often internalised and strongly influence women's behaviours and gender roles/ expectations in marriage. Ideals of a 'good man' mostly stress decision-making authority, the role as head of the household and economic provider or – in some cases – his ability to refrain from bad behaviours such as drinking, gambling or beating his wife (Table 3).

Table 2: Strongly held ideals of masculinity and femininity

The good wife	The good husband
<i>In Viet Nam</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should try to do housework to make enough for eating and wearing and then nobody can criticise her • Knows how to wash her husband's clothes, cooks three meals a day for him • When friends visit her house, her husband and parents-in-law may be all drunk, [but] she will let them go to rest early, she will entertain the guest and won't go to rest until all of them go home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must try to help his family and doesn't gamble so much his neighbours have to criticise • Loves his wife, doesn't drink much wine, doesn't hang around too much, doesn't have love affairs with other women, doesn't gamble • Knows to think for his wife and children. When he's drunk, he sleeps, he doesn't beat his wife. Such men are very rare
<i>In Nepal</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be hard-working, able to do housework • Should serve in-laws and be submissive and supportive to them • Should treat neighbours well and keep honour of the house in front of them – that is, should not complain about in-laws to neighbours • Should live in joint family with the in-laws and not go out of the house except for household work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not drink alcohol or beat the wife • Does not play cards • Has a job – can provide well for his wife and children and take care of parents • Is more educated than the wife
<i>In Uganda</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be married and have children • Is humble and obedient; does not engage in gossip • Does domestic chores and cares for husband providing food in time, bringing water for his bathing, washing his clothes, welcoming him at home... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the household head, providing for family, buying clothes, paying school fees • Hard-working, with a job • Does not beat wife • Enforces discipline, security; protects family, property
<i>In Ethiopia</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally does not do 'male' jobs like going into the field • Stays at home to manage the household and feed the husband and children; teaches her children good manners • Observes the traditions of the community and keeps good relationships with neighbours and friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides economically for his family and engages in community work • Makes the decisions regarding children's schooling • Controls household finances and decisions on family size; does not cook

While certain constants in such ideals run through our country case studies, particular cultural inflections are apparent – for example, the emphasis on serving the in-laws in *Nepal*, where the typical marriage pattern is for the young bride to move into her husband’s family; or the importance of the woman ‘maintaining face’ in front of neighbours by not complaining publicly about household issues in both *Viet Nam and Nepal*.

Context-specific differences in calculation of trade-offs between marriage and education

Men and women and girls and boys in all the study communities held different views about the value of education for girls as potential marriage partners and the trade-offs involved in girls delaying marriage to attain higher educational levels.

- In *Ethiopia*, the value of education is seen both from a practical perspective and an aspirational one. From a practical standpoint, there was a general agreement that ‘*men don’t want to marry an illiterate girl*’, and so if a girl aspires to having an educated husband, she must herself push ahead with her studies. Also, in a context of growing economic hardships, there is greater awareness of girls’ potential economic contribution to the household, and a sense that with better education, girls can aspire to make more money as well as manage household finances more effectively. Sometimes, parents believe their daughters are better off staying in education, particularly if they can hold onto their land in the meantime.
- In *Uganda*, most respondents agreed that education added to the value of a girl as reflected in higher bride wealth payments and also felt it could make her a better wife and mother because of the greater degree of capability it conferred on her. At the same time, some cautioned that education would not automatically make a woman more caring of children or loving of in-laws; education could, in fact, make girls ‘lazy’ at home or impel them into work outside the home, causing them to neglect family duties. Some felt that highly educated girls would have more difficulty finding husbands, partly because they would not find men with a similar level of education and because less educated men would not want to marry them.
- In *Nepal*, while education is seen as a good quality in a girl, it is not a quality strong enough to make a desirable or ‘good’ wife. Instead, boys looked for a combination of obedience and meekness – expressed by the local term ‘*sanskar*’, meaning cultured – and the status of the family in terms of *sanskar*, which is considered more important than the girl’s level of education. Moreover, uneducated boys do not want to marry educated girls, as they feel it is not a proper match. People gave examples of girls who are educated and beyond marriageable age (by local standards) that have not been able to marry because of this mismatch.
- In *Viet Nam*, nearly all study participants, adolescents and adults, believed that 9th grade girls (i.e. lower secondary) were likely to be better wives and mothers than their less educated peers, primarily because they better understood the value of hygiene and nutrition. However, education beyond that level was seen to render girls less desirable as marriage partners as it is commonly held that ‘*those who go to the 12th grade are lazy, not hardworking*’. As one 16-year-old boy noted: ‘*The mother with grade 9 education is better than the mother with grade 12 education. The mother with low education works more diligently than the mother with high education. The mother with higher secondary school education works less and often scolds parents-in-law.*’ These sentiments capture a variety of strongly held norms, including the tight relationship between the value of women and their work, and the expectation of a daughter-in-law’s silent subservience.

2.4 Important interplay between supply and demand factors

To be most effective, efforts to change social norms operating primarily on the ‘demand’ side (through spreading awareness of legal and normative issues around gender equity and rights) must be accompanied by parallel efforts to open up opportunities on the ‘supply’ side (through investments in service provision and support structures); otherwise, significant progress for girls will be inhibited.

One example can be seen in the contradictions between the increased social value being placed on girls’ education (for example, in *Uganda and Viet Nam*) accompanied by limited investment in provision of secondary schools to allow that value to be realised. At the same time, as already described, mediating institutions on the supply side can have complex meanings for communities. Schools, for example, may be

associated not just with education and empowerment for girls (as was seen in all cases, and particularly highlighted in *Nepal*), but with indiscriminate gender mixing (in *Viet Nam and Ethiopia*) and can also reproduce patterns of gender discrimination through sexual harassment of girls in school (as in *Uganda*).

It is also apparent that efforts to promote higher levels of education for girls without an expansion of economic opportunities to allow them to utilize the knowledge and skills they acquire can rightly lead to community resistance as households make their own calculations about the relative value of education and marriage to their daughters' wellbeing. As an adolescent Hmong girl in *Viet Nam* put it: *'My parents say that I am a girl, so I shouldn't go to school anymore, the upper secondary school education brings nothing, so they let me stay at home.'* Lack of employment opportunities and lack of role models of school-leavers who have become successful can dampen local enthusiasm for investment in education as a pathway to empowerment.

Beyond supply and demand factors within education, campaigns to raise awareness about the rights of women and children – unless accompanied by investment in sensitive and effective legal protection and redress services – can actually disempower women and girls because they are unable to claim their rights. In *Uganda*, for example, uneven enforcement of laws against under-age marriage and sexual relations, and failure of legal services to address gender-based violence leave adolescent girls and women unprotected while discriminatory social norms and practices remain intact.

One of the starkest gaps in supply in many, though not all of the countries is the dearth of adolescent-friendly reproductive and health information and services – including in schools, which partly reflects the power of 'injunctive' norms against unmarried adolescent sex in the face of contradictory 'empirical' norms of behaviour. In *Viet Nam*, for example, though girls and boys have far more opportunities to interact with one another than their parents did at the same age, they do not have access to any more sexual or reproductive health information; pre-marital sexual activity is considered taboo and even adolescents believe that it would be inappropriate for them to understand the nature of marital relations. In *Uganda*, the law of 'defilement' actually criminalises all sexual relations under the age of 18 – whether consensual or not. While the national adolescent health policy proposes access to appropriate reproductive health information and services, such services are rare, and health workers are often uncertain about whether they can in fact offer these services to teenagers. This means that unwanted pregnancies continue to fuel early marriage and/or contribute to girls dropping out of school.

2.5 The power of positive role models

Positive role models from the community seem to be particularly powerful in opening up new models of behaviour and acceptance of changed norms.

- In *Viet Nam*, Hmong role models – not just women but also men who want a different life for their daughters – are encouraging change. For example, a small number of families have invested in upper secondary education for their daughters. They not only demonstrate that education is attainable, but as their children take on wage labour and are appointed to official positions, they also model a way out of the hardships inherent in subsistence farming. Respondents noted that the few girls who had completed high school, even though they were unmarried at 21, were 'well spoken'. The community was certain that they would ultimately find husbands who would enable them to lead lives that were not centred on constant physical labour. But while local role models exist, they remain very rare. Importantly, there are no Hmong teachers in the study communities and most study participants had clear notions of what was possible for members of the Hmong versus what was possible for other people.
- In *Nepal*, strong female role models have a very important impact, and are usually women who work in the development, education or health sectors. Some of these women, especially teachers, have helped adolescent girls while others are actively engaged in efforts to end discrimination against girls and to stop gender-based violence and harmful social practices, including *chaupadi* (in which menstruating women are considered 'impure' and prohibited from participating in normal family and community activities). Thus, role models (who may be teachers but also elder brothers or sisters) are people whom adolescents look up to as agents for change. They can introduce adolescents to new ways of thinking and doing things, and are involved in

challenging and changing discriminatory practices in their society. When young people were able to take up positions as local leaders, heads of peer groups, government representatives or local teachers, they also became important agents for change and opened people's minds towards change.

- In **Uganda**, girls or women from the community who have 'made it' have a significant influence on younger girls: one girl cited the inspiration she felt when her father took her to a secondary school graduation ceremony and she was able to see – for the first time – what female success at school looked like. Senior women teachers could also serve as role models; however, their roles seemed to be diminishing in recent years, with little support for the added functions they are supposed to provide as mentors for girls at school.
- In **Ethiopia**, girls who succeed in their education provide good examples to their peers and act as role models, thus encouraging other parents to send their daughters to school. As one key informant noted: *'Students who complete grade 10 and leave the place also become role models for the others following them. So the attitude of the community, especially the youth, is changed to giving attention to education and going abroad instead of into marriage.'*

2.6 The critical nature of family support

Just as our year 1 research in most of the study countries identified the foundational nature of the household as the site where gender roles, identities and possibilities are forged and shaped, our year 2 findings highlight the critical importance of the family in either perpetuating gender discriminatory norms and practices or establishing an environment conducive to the development of transformative change.

- In **Uganda**, conflicts or abuse from parents or step-parents and a perceived lack of material or emotional support within the natal family were key factors contributing to the rising trend of young adolescent girls leaving home to enter into informal cohabitation with boyfriends. As these were often unstable, the girls involved (and any children they produced) would often end up abandoned without legal recourse to further support, thus facing a bleak future. On the other hand, girls with supportive families could overcome considerable odds to continue their education and make something of themselves, as with one of our case study examples who, with encouragement from her mother and father, not only managed to complete secondary school but went on to university – a rare exception in this rural area. The father's support may be critical. As one of our key informants put it, *'At the bottom of it all is society's perception of women, and this starts within the family. Women in society who have made it – highly educated, those who have achieved success – a significant proportion of them had fathers who believed differently from the rest of society.'*
- In **Nepal**, given that social norms are unwritten and are forever in a state of flux, they can provide space for families to manoeuvre around them in order to give opportunities for a girl's development. As there are no organised groups in society working to resist small changes, families end up having considerable flexibility in how they decide to deal with a daughter or, indeed, a son who may transgress certain social norms. Thus, if the family is supportive, it can act as a safety net for adolescent girls and can assist them in developing their capabilities even if the girls go against expected behaviours. Positive case studies revealed that where girls have been able to achieve beyond local expectations, male relatives (whether fathers, fathers-in-law or husbands) have been an important source of support.
- In **Ethiopia**, the importance of engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality and increasing girls' opportunities emerged strongly. Boys recognised that girls' work burden at home affects their school achievements. As such, a common ingredient across many of the successful positive outlier case studies was the key role of supportive fathers, brothers and husbands in enabling girls to delay marriage and/or continue their education.
- In **Viet Nam**, a case study example illustrates how a young paternal orphan, exploited for labour in her natal home by her alcoholic uncle after her mother's remarriage, found solace and support through marriage at 18 to a young man who is now a commune officer. They enjoy a remarkably equitable relationship and share responsibilities and decision-making on the upbringing of their children.

3 Lessons learned on research methodology and approach

3.1 Overview of research tools

The nature and aims of the study demanded a mixed methods approach. The main methods for data collection are outlined in Table 4 below. While the literature review included analysis of available statistical sources on girls' education and marriage, field research itself was of qualitative nature. Two of the field instruments (the intergenerational trios and the marital network analysis) are particularly innovative – designed specifically for the needs of this study. All tools were adapted for use in the different country contexts and piloted before finalisation for the study. Lessons learned from their application in the field are drawn from discussions with the country teams, building on lessons learned from field methods in the year 1 study (Samuels and Jones, 2014) which had highlighted, among other things, the importance of investing in a multi-layered research design.

Table 3: Research tools and aims

Instrument	Aims
Community mapping and timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand basic forms, types and practices of marriage • To understand availability of education services as well as values and practices around girls' education • To understand key historical trends and shifts over time in social norms and practices • To contextualise findings
Focus group discussions <i>Separately with adolescent s (girls and boys) and adults (mothers and fathers)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore perspectives on social norms and practices around marriage and education as well as ideals of masculinity and femininity • To understand the reference groups that monitor and enforce social norms and practices around marriage and education • To understand changes over time
In-depth interviews <i>with brothers of adolescent girls</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore male views on masculinity and femininity and how they relate to past and current practices surrounding schooling and marriage
Intergenerational trios <i>Separate interviews with 3 generations of women (grandmothers, mothers, daughters)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore shifts in the relative importance and framing of social norms and experiences of marriage and education across generations
Marital network analyses <i>Separate interviews with young married couples, parents and in-laws and other culturally significant individuals (e.g. paternal aunt)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore intra-household relations, including power relations and decision-making, views and expectations on marital roles and responsibilities
Outlier case studies <i>of adolescent girls</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore the unique situations of girls who are either 'positive deviants' in their communities or whose lives have been tightly constrained by traditional norms and practices
Key informant interviews <i>at national and district level</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gain expert and official insights into social norms and norm change around girls' education and marriage • To identify policies and programmes that address gender discriminatory social norms

Instrument	Aims
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand how different reference groups (national/local) might be working to promote different sets of norms
<i>Literature review and analysis</i> <i>(national and district level)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify key national policy, programme and planning documents relevant to adolescent girls and education To identify and review previous studies on the topic To analyse statistical trends on girls' education and marriage To gain additional contextual information

3.2 Success and challenges in fieldwork

Combining multiple tools and capturing diverse perspectives

All study teams agreed on the benefits that arose from applying multiple research tools among diverse categories of study participants to capture multiple patterns and perceptions of change and to 'triangulate' responses. In particular, the intergenerational trios and the marital networks – innovative tools designed specifically for the needs of this study – proved very powerful in capturing different perspectives; the focus group discussions allowed groups of study participants to interact with each other as well as with the study team, while the individual interviews allowed more in-depth probing on particular issues.

The 'outlier' case study methodology also proved to be particularly valuable in capturing detailed information on specific individuals who had particular stories to tell – the narrative aspect of these stories adds a powerful illustration of key study themes. Some teams, particularly *Uganda*, found the key informant interviews at both national and district levels especially illuminating, while the study team in *Viet Nam* emphasised the importance of talking with men at household and community levels.

At the same time, analysis of findings from such an array of tools and study participants can be quite complex, so this needs to be taken into consideration beforehand. The study team in *Uganda* suggested that it may therefore be best to focus particular instruments on particular study themes rather than to attempt to try to capture the same information from each. Some teams proposed further training in software in qualitative data analysis to facilitate consolidation of the findings.

Some study team members suggested the need to further combine quantitative methodologies with qualitative approaches, beyond the analysis of national data sets conducted during the literature review, as available national statistics are not usually disaggregated to the level that would be most useful in analysing actual empirical trends in a given locality. Other study team members suggested honing other kinds of historical methods and approaches to give more depth to the findings.

Dealing with the complexity and sensitivity of research domains and settings

All of the study teams felt that the sensitivity of some of the issues addressed required particular research skills and procedures both to safeguard the anonymity of the respondents and to establish the conditions needed to elicit true responses.

- Teams in both *Ethiopia* and *Viet Nam* stressed the need to reassure respondents of the scope and purpose of the research project, as well as of the confidentiality of responses, because some topics – for example, marriage under the age of 18 – are in transgression of national laws, and respondents rightly fear prosecution should their actions come to the light of local officials.
- All teams agreed that methodological choices – for example, between focus groups or individual interviews – needed to be based not only on age and gender considerations, but on cultural specificities on how comfortable or willing individuals are to share very personal information with others.
- All teams highlighted the complexity of the local field settings and the specificity of the findings, calling for some caution in generalising from the study results. The team in *Uganda* identified challenges in discerning specific patterns of social norms and social norm change in community settings that are multi-ethnic and

multi-religious; the team in *Viet Nam* identified individual variations both within and between ethnic groups; the team in *Nepal* remarked how the choice of field setting – for example, its remoteness – influences findings significantly, while the team in *Uganda* noted that the ways questions are phrased, or the depths explored by probing questions, can also influence findings.

Many teams commented on the added value of a focus on one key domain or nexus (marriage/education) rather than on multiple domains, as had been explored in year one; this allows more in-depth exploration of the topic. At the same time, the breadth of findings on the multiple capability domains of adolescent girls in year one have proven very valuable as a backdrop and to allow contextualisation of findings from year 2; so ultimately, both approaches are seen to be important.

Establishing appropriate time frames for research

Experience from the field research in all four study countries confirms the importance not of only setting aside sufficient time for planning and implementation but also of scheduling the research for times of the year and day that are appropriate for the particular study communities.

- The study team in *Viet Nam* highlighted the need to factor in time in the planning phase for the translation of instruments and the submission of required paperwork for official approval for the study. All of this needs to start well in advance of the planned field research.
- The study team in *Uganda* noted the added value of pre-site visits to the study districts, setting aside time in the planning phase to work directly with district and sub-district officials and community development workers to select the specific categories of participants in the study communities and prepare for the research.
- The study team in *Nepal* underscored the importance of taking into consideration the agricultural calendar of the rural study communities and planning the research during months when study participants had the most leisure time to engage with the research team.

All country teams agreed that interviews with different categories of study participants needed to be planned at different times during the day. Adult women/mothers, for example, may have most time to talk after completion of their morning chores; school-aged children, on the other hand, are available only in the afternoons, after school, unless the research takes place during a holiday period. The length of interview also needs to be carefully calibrated to take into account individual participants' capabilities – for example, children's shorter attention spans, or older people's potential physical or mental frailty.

Engaging with a broad array of stakeholders in planning and feedback

- Study teams in *Viet Nam*, *Nepal* and *Uganda* highlighted the benefits from sharing the study methodology and approach with key stakeholders beforehand as a prelude to later policy-influencing activities.
- The team in *Uganda* stressed the importance of working through local leaders to access local communities and taking back the findings to the study communities to allow them to reflect on and appreciate the issues and the need to address them.

4 Policy and programme implications

4.1 Key findings and implications

Insights from our research highlight both the strength of social norms in shaping expectations and opportunities around marriage and education for adolescent girls as well as the complex ways in which change is either promoted or inhibited through different drivers at different levels and in different contexts. For the most part, the study findings confirm expectations from our conceptual framework on how the drivers of positive change in social norms as well as the forces maintaining discriminatory gender norms may be mediated by a variety of factors, operating through a variety of institutions and sites, to affect adolescent girls' capability domains. Table 5 summarises some of the key findings in relation to the corresponding premise set out in the conceptual framework, and highlights their policy implications.

Table 4: Implications of findings in relation to conceptual framework

What we expected	What we found	Policy implications
<i>Drivers of positive change in gender norms and practices</i>		
Economic change and urbanisation	True to an extent, as observed primarily in constraints imposed by rural settings with limited economic diversification. But economic changes per se do not always alleviate poverty, nor bring positive changes for women and girls; features of urbanisation such as trading centres may heighten gender vulnerabilities; and migration does not always bring about positive change	Measures are needed that promote economic development which takes into account both practical and strategic gender needs and provides specific economic opportunities for women and girls
Legal measures	Critical as a driver of positive change in all countries; especially powerful when backed up by strong information campaigns and enforcement, including sanctions. At the same time, some laws (e.g. against marriage or polygamy) may drive such practices underground, or lead to 'accepted ways' of circumventing them at community level	Continued support for legal promotional campaigns and enforcement is critical, accompanied by ongoing community dialogue
Social and political mobilisation	Confirmed as a positive force in our findings, including campaigns for girls' education and children's and women's rights; however, these were also sometimes found to provoke a backlash	Inclusive social mobilisation processes are needed that enlist men and boys as critical partners in change
Increased access to media and communications	Important in all country studies, with heightened awareness of the value of education and the dangers of early marriage; however, some ambiguous effects of use of new forms of ICT such as mobile phones and content of some video/TV transmissions	Information campaigns to support positive change should be strengthened through 'edutainment'-type media initiatives; community dialogue is needed around ICTs
Education	A strong driver – both through what is learned as well as empowerment processes through clubs, support of female teachers, and provision of an institutional 'space' for adolescent development, counteracting the otherwise swift traditional transition from childhood to adulthood. However, gender-insensitive or unsafe environments can reinforce discrimination and/or accentuate vulnerabilities, while lack of secondary school opportunities inhibits full development of girls' capabilities	There is a need for enhanced investment in the quality of education (including curriculum, gender-sensitive environments, and extracurricular activities and after-school clubs), as well as expansion of opportunities for secondary school and technical training

Positive role models	Such role models are important both inside the family and within the wider community; however, they are often scarce	Concerted efforts to identify, cultivate, and publicly recognise positive role models are needed at community level, as well as parenting programmes to enhance positive family practices and support
<i>Forces maintaining discriminatory norms and practices</i>		
Cultural and religious beliefs	True, particularly in terms of deep-seated socio-cultural norms and ideals of femininity; ideologies of honour and shame linked to control of female bodies and autonomy; and gendered division of labour within the household. At the same time, local religious authorities can support progressive laws on age of marriage	Engagement with local cultural leaders and religious authorities is critical through community dialogues and information campaigns around education and marriage
Vested interests of powerful groups	True, seen particularly in men’s resistance to promotion of ‘women’s rights’, and parental reluctance to relinquish control over children’s marriage, seen as a matter between families and – through systems of bridewealth – a potential for economic gain	See above on recommendation to enlist men and boys as key allies in bringing about change in gendered social norms
Lack of information	Seen particularly in lack of access to or uptake of adolescent-friendly reproductive and sexual health information and services, leading to heightened risk of early pregnancy outside of marriage. This was one factor contributing to parental insistence on early marriage and/or entry into informal cohabitation arrangements	It is important to clarify policies and expand adolescents’ access to sexual and reproductive health information, including in schools; as well as to strengthen outreach to facilitate uptake
Gender stereotyping – in media, schools and other public services	Gender stereotyping, evident in common sayings about women and men, remain potent purveyors of discriminatory norms and values; gender-insensitive classrooms and health services dilute the potentially transformative power of such services	Curricula and media messages should be reviewed, and service providers should be sensitised to provide gender-sensitive services; there is also a need to extol the virtues of ‘outliers’ who transcend norms in positive ways
Fear of economic or social sanctions combined with social, psychological or economic rewards of compliance	True on the part of girls who wish to avoid parental disapproval or sanctions or help maintain ‘face’; true also on the part of parents who seek to benefit from bridewealth or wish to avoid the stigma of an unmarried daughter becoming pregnant, or simply remaining unmarried and a ‘burden’ on household economy; but some evidence of family members resisting norms	Efforts should focus on expanding economic opportunities (and preparation) for girls so that options beyond marriage become more viable, while promoting successful role models who bring pride to the community

4.2 Priority recommendations

Based on the research findings and their implications as outlined in Table 5, the country research teams identified a number of key priorities and recommendations for combating gender discriminatory norms related to early marriage and practices that negatively affect adolescent girls’ capabilities, as well as for addressing specific obstacles to girls being able to continue their education. While country-specific measures will differ depending on the national and local contexts, there are some cross-cutting priorities, as follows.

Strengthen legal enforcement

- Seek a balanced integration of ‘top-down’ measures (strengthened laws and enforcement, including sanctions, around early marriage and obligatory education) with ‘bottom-up’ initiatives (community dialogues, youth clubs/associations and communications activities) as an ongoing strategy to promote and support positive changes in social norms and practices.

Invest in communications initiatives

- Harness the potential of new ICTs (including television, videos, and smartphones as well as more traditional, community-based forms of communication) as a form of ‘edutainment’ to promote positive

stories and messages around gender-equitable social norms and practices, and demonstrate possibilities that can help expand young people's perspectives beyond what is locally available.

Enhance educational supply and demand

- Increase investment in the improvement of education supply (including free and obligatory quality service provision and, in particular, expanded access to secondary schools closer to home; a strengthened role for senior women teachers who can guide and support adolescent girls; development of school-based clubs and activities; 'second chance' education for those who have dropped out, alongside policies around retention and continuation of education for pregnant girls and child mothers; vocational training) while continuing to strengthen demand (promoting the social value of girls' education; supporting household opportunity costs of sending girls to school; providing transport or boarding facilities).

Expand access to and uptake of health information and services

- Invest in sexual and reproductive health education and services for adolescents and young people, including through policies that promote and safeguard the rights of adolescents to appropriate health information and care; invest in capacity development to design and deliver programmes that are adolescent-friendly, as well as outreach to promote uptake.

Strengthen protective and promotional measures for girls

- Strengthen measures to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, including through mass information campaigns, community dialogues and engagement around violence and masculinity, strengthened legal protection and police services, and the creation of safe spaces for women and girls to meet socially.
- Enhance and provide support services for girls who are married, including outreach and counselling, parenting support, legal advice, as well as vocational training and expanded opportunities for social networking to break the social and physical isolation many of these married young girls experience.
- Expand economic opportunities and empowerment for girls (and boys) in and out of school within the context of overall poverty reduction, including through increased investment in technical training and skills development.

Strengthen individual 'agency' and initiative around gender-progressive models

- Support measures to enhance girls' self-esteem (through clubs, leadership training) and encourage the development of positive role models (documenting examples of 'positive deviance', promoting mentoring by women from the community who have 'made it').

Enlist partners in broad-based social mobilisation efforts

- Engage men and boys at household level (through family education, better parenting initiatives, support for positive examples) and enlist local leaders at community level (community influencers, traditional authorities, religious leaders and other 'gatekeepers') as key allies in supporting gender-equitable social norms and practices in line with local values.
- Strengthen intersectoral coordination for integrated approaches at all levels to deal with the multiple facets of discriminatory social norms and the specific vulnerabilities they generate for adolescent girls across multiple sectors and capability domains.

Further enhance the evidence base

- Deepen the data and information base for evidence-based policy development around adolescent girls and their capabilities, showing the social costs of gender discrimination, detailing local specificities, capturing girls' voices, and linking quantitative and qualitative analyses.

5 Looking forward: year 3 research

Having mapped adolescent girls' intersecting capabilities in year 1, and the role of social norms in shaping or inhibiting change at the nexus between early marriage and education in year 2, our year 3 fieldwork will use a social norms lens to assess selected policy and programme interventions to tackle early marriage and under-investment in girls' education in each country. The emphasis will be on communications approaches as broadly defined across a spectrum of intervention types identified in our review of communications interventions (Marcus, 2014a and Marcus and Paige, 2014a).

Overall research objectives are: (1) to highlight examples of good practice; (2) to identify external and internal programming factors contributing to good practice; and (3) to make recommendations based on our understanding of the capability deprivations that adolescent girls face (from year 1) and drivers of social norm change processes (from year 2) as to how these programmes and broader programming and policy efforts could be enhanced. Through this process, we will contribute to strengthening the information and evidence base for continued progress in transforming the lives of adolescent girls and young women.



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ISSN: 2052-7209

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