Changing gender norms: monitoring and evaluating programmes and projects

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Knowledge to action: Researching gender norms that affect adolescent girls

Acknowledgements

Cover photo: Group of girls, Nepal © Fiona Samuels, 2014

Key points

- To assess the impact of programmes and projects on gender norms, it will normally be necessary to collect primary data.

- Four main types of indicators and data can help shed light on gender norms: attitude data, data on intentions, measures of outcomes or practices, and measures of what people perceive prevailing norms to be. Insightful studies are likely to use a combination of different types of indicators.

- Cross-check your data: people may have good reasons for giving socially acceptable responses about their attitudes, intentions, practices or prevailing norms, which do not actually reflect reality. Many programmes have multiple components that may contribute to norm change. Try to design monitoring and evaluation activities so that they can identify which components are having the greatest impact. This is important not only for effective programming, but also to contribute to the global pool of knowledge on what leads to change in gender norms.

- Where possible, follow up participants some years after the end of a programme or project to see how far they have been able to sustain changes in norms and practices.

Setting the scene

To understand whether projects and programmes designed to change discriminatory gender norms are having their intended impacts, you need to monitor change, or lack of change at regular intervals. As well as highlighting areas you might need to change, so as to maximise impact, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data can contribute to the pool of global knowledge on how to change discriminatory gender norms. M&E data can help us identify what works (and does not work) in particular circumstances, and can help others avoid mistakes and build on successes.

This Research and Practice Note gives some pointers on how to monitor and evaluate programmes and projects that set out to change gender norms. It includes some indicators that have been used in other programmes and studies. Another Note in this series, *What can internationally comparable quantitative data tell us about how gender norms are changing?* explains how you can use existing data to understand norm change. You should therefore read it alongside this Note. You may find two of the other Notes useful too, as they explore some of the practical challenges involved in doing field research with adolescent girls and their families.

When can you use existing survey data to monitor project and programme impacts?

Existing data (including internationally comparable quantitative surveys with local or national-level data) may not be much use to you in monitoring any changes or impacts of a programme you are implementing. Some gender norms and practices – such as adolescent girls having a limited say in decisions that affect them at home or in the community – are not covered by such surveys.

For other norms and practices, existing surveys may cover relevant issues, but the data cannot be used for project or programme monitoring for various reasons -for example, because rounds of data are not collected frequently enough, because there is not full geographical coverage, or, most importantly, because sample frames are rarely structured in ways that enable you to assess the impact of a particular programme. (There are occasional exceptions – such as large-scale national programmes that have been rolled out in different areas at different times, which give us the chance to compare any change in areas that received the intervention with other areas that did not). So for these reasons, it is likely that you will need to collect new primary data on how gender norms affect adolescent girls to monitor and evaluate any changes that can be linked to your programme or intervention.

Approaches to monitoring changes in gender norms

In this Research and Practice Note series, we define gender norms as informal rules and shared social expectations that distinguish expected behaviour on the basis of gender (to find out more, see *Social norms, gender norms and adolescent girls: a brief guide)*. As with other social norms, it can be challenging to monitor changes in gender norms. But there are some indicators that can give you important insights, and we discuss these below.

Attitude indicators. Although individuals' attitudes can differ from prevailing norms, attitude data give insights into how common certain views are among a given community or social group, and how those views may be changing. Examples of attitude indicators include the proportion of people who think that girls should get married soon after puberty, or think that education is more important for boys than girls.

Monitoring changing intentions. Asking people about their intentions can capture a middle ground between indicators of attitudes (what people think) and indicators of practice (what they actually do). This is particularly useful where people are not yet in a position to take a certain course of action – for example, if their daughter is still too young to go to school or to be married. An example of this kind of indicator would be the intention to send a daughter to high school or university or to arrange her marriage during the next year. Questions about people's intentions are common in reproductive health studies on issues such as use of contraceptives, or how long mothers expect to breastfeed babies for etc.) but could also be used to monitor change in other types of gender norm.

Monitoring changing practices and outcomes. Because there is often a difference between what people think (attitudes) and what they do (practices), you will need to monitor how practices are actually changing, as well as any changes in what people think is the right way to behave. For example, school attendance rates for girls and boys or average age at marriage are common indicators of practices that can tell you how discriminatory norms may be changing, while outcome indicators can also give indirect evidence. Examples of outcome indicators include the proportion of girls who complete primary school or pass school-leaving exams, or who give birth during adolescence. Bear in mind, though, that norm changes may be only one of the factors behind changes in attitudes and practices; you should therefore probe the reasons why people are doing things differently (or not).

For example, if data indicate a rise in the average age at marriage, you should try to find out which factors have been most important in driving this change. It may, for example, reflect the introduction of incentive payments for girls to stay on in school or delay marriage – which could indicate people responding to the incentive without actually changing a cultural preference for early marriage; or it could be that early marriage remains common practice but people are not registering such marriages formally so as to avoid falling foul of laws on minimum age at marriage – which would indicate that norms are not actually changing.

You may need to use qualitative data collection methods alongside quantitative methods to really find out whether people are changing what they do as a result of legal or policy changes. During our research, we found examples of people camouflaging under-age weddings as religious ceremonies (in Ethiopia), and families not registering under-age marriages (Viet Nam and Uganda). You may not be able to collect quantitative data on these practices but qualitative data (such as interviews with key informants) can tell you whether such practices exist, and whether they are becoming more or less common.

Monitoring people's perceptions of gender norms. Researchers often try to find out how people perceive gender norms by asking how strongly a person agrees with a particular statement (e.g. 'In our culture/ this community, people believe that girls should marry soon after they start menstruating' or 'Around here, people think it's more important for boys to complete their education than it is for girls'). People are asked if they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or disagree strongly. This is known as a Likert-style survey question. Another approach is to ask what the consequences of not complying with a particular norm might be – and to monitor how that is changing over time. For example, you could ask: 'what would happen if a girl didn't get married by the time she was [insert appropriate age]'?

Indicators based on perceptions of what other people think can be unreliable, though, as the questions can be confusing, and/or respondents may simply say that they don't know. Another approach is to use scenarios and ask respondents how they think people would or should act in particular situations. Using different scenarios can help you find out how strong particular norms are, and the situations in which people apply them (or not) (Bicchieri et al., 2014). For example, scenarios designed to understand

> **Box 1: Problems with phrasing questions about changing gender norms**
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> A baseline study to enable researchers to measure changing norms on child marriage in Bangladesh suggested several adaptations for future rounds.
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> The study had attempted to distinguish between what people think others should do and what people actually do when it comes to child marriage – what they think others actually do, what they think others should do, what they should do themselves and what they think others expect them to do.
>
> The study team found these questions repetitive, and they did not translate well, which meant certain subtleties were lost.
>
> They also found that respondents struggled with Likert-style questions and found it difficult to say, for example, whether they strongly supported a practice or only supported it somewhat.
>
> Some interviewers attempted to overcome these problems by using scenarios and stories. Overall, the study recommended more systematic use of these approaches.
>
> *Source: Paina et al., 2014*

and monitor changes in norms about early marriage could vary a few key factors such as the age of the girl in question, the family's economic situation, the availability (or absence) of a good marriage partner, etc. (See Box 1). The interviewer can ask respondents how they think a decision-maker, such as the girl's father or mother, would act in different situations and why. If they commonly refer to traditions or cultural values, this may indicate that the norm in question is influential; if responses do not refer to gender norms, this could suggest that people's actions are more influenced by other factors, such as economic factors. To keep this simple and understandable for respondents, the number of scenarios should be limited and designed to probe the most important variable – such as the girl's age.

Our research in Uganda found that it was best not to use the term 'social norms' with respondents, but rather to 'unpack (norms) through linking them to certain issues. For instance, if you say social norm and you talk about what … the kinds of things people believe in, (or) practices that are considered to be the normal things, say on marriage, (the respondents) would begin to describe them.' (Interview with Grace Bantebya Kyomuhendo, February 2015.)

Pointers to help you monitor and evaluate changes in gender norms that affect adolescent girls

In this section we outline some pointers to guide your efforts to monitor and evaluate changes in the gender norms that affect adolescent girls.

Listen to Professor Grace Bantebya discussing ways of getting respondents' perceptions of what norms are and how they are changing. For more detail see *Doing qualitative field research on gender norms with adolescent girls and their families.*

Use a combination of standardised and locally relevant indicators. Using standardised indicators (e.g. school enrolment or attendance rates, average age at marriage, adolescent pregnancy rates) means you can make comparisons between different approaches or between projects and programmes in different areas. But they rarely pick up subtler changes at a local level. For this reason, locally generated indicators are often a useful complement to standardised indicators. For example, our fieldwork researching gender norms on education in the Doti region of Nepal suggested that as well as using standard indicators (such as gender disparities in enrolment, attendance, progression and completion rates), looking at

TIP

Cross-checking your data

It can be difficult to monitor changes in gender norms because people may give what they perceive to be the 'correct' response to a question even if it is not what they think or do. This can lead to under-reporting of behaviour or attitudes that are illegal or frowned upon (e.g. child marriage) and over -reporting of behaviour or attitudes perceived as desirable, such as sending all children to school or treating sons and daughters equally. People may also want to avoid painting their community in a bad light, which may also lead to under-reporting of discriminatory gender norms. This means that measures of norms may be best interpreted as broad indicators rather than precise measures of how common particular norms are.

One way around this is to triangulate survey responses with administrative data, and data from observations. Some studies have employed PhD students to gather ethnographic data that can complement and triangulate survey data – for example, Adato's study for the International Food Policy Research Institute, looking at the impact of conditional cash transfers in Nicaragua and Turkey (Adato, 2007).

the ratios of boys to girls attending private schools and receiving private tuition would yield insights into whether parents were placing more value on (and investing in) girls' and/or boys' education. Locally generated indicators may be developed through participatory processes (potentially including adolescent girls), or could emerge from consultations with key informants.

Aim to capture insights into attitudes, intentions, practices, and perceptions of norms. Capturing this range of insights about what people think and what they do can give you a more rounded picture of gender norms in a particular area, and how people's attitudes and practices may be changing. Focusing on just one type of indicator is likely to give only a partial picture of how norms are changing.

Use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data – though essential for getting a picture of how widespread certain attitudes and practices may be – are likely to yield further insights if complemented by qualitative data. These might focus on issues that are not easy to quantify or on changes that are significant but not necessarily widespread, probing the reasons why changes have (or have not) occurred in different areas.

Qualitative data are essential for understanding people's perceptions of which norm changes are having the greatest impact on their lives. Box 2 on the following page gives examples based on the 'most significant change' approach in Uganda, which can generate surprising insights. Qualitative data can also be helpful for understanding collective changes, which can be harder to pick up through surveys that are based on individual responses.

Make use of contextual data. Recognising that gender norms are upheld and reinforced through formal institutions such as the law, media, education systems, etc., you might find it useful to complement monitoring of individuals' attitudes and behaviour with indicators of change in these wider institutions. This is particularly important for programmes that are seeking to influence discourse or practices among these institutions. Monitoring changes in the way these institutions approach gender norms can also provide important insights into the drivers of change in gender norms in a given context. For example, you can often find the text of national laws on government websites and compare changes over time, or this type of analysis may have already been done by an NGO or by individual researchers.

You could monitor changes in how the media approaches gender equality (either in general or on specific issues) by looking at the content of newspapers (print or online) or in selected radio or TV programmes. It is likely to be easier to access back copies of print media and to track changes in social media than accessing past radio or TV broadcasts. So if monitoring changes in the broader media environment is important to your programme or project (e.g. if it is aiming to influence public discourse on gender issues), you should decide which programmes you will track up front and build in listening/ watching as part of regular data collection.

If you are collecting primary data be aware that you may need to frame your data collection carefully so as not to influence the behaviour of your respondents/ the people you are observing. For example, if you are monitoring changes in the way teachers handle discriminatory gender norms in schools, you might want to state that your research is about understanding the differences in boys' and girls' school lives, rather than directly mentioning teacher behaviour.

Where possible, design your M&E so that you can isolate the effects of different programme activities. Many programmes designed to change gender norms have multiple components, but few studies or evaluations examine the impact of each component separately. Sometimes this reflects programme design, in that all components are delivered as a package. Where it is possible to look at the impact of individual components (e.g. if elements of the programme are sequenced, or if different combinations have been implemented in different areas), you should try to do so, as it could generate some useful insights. For example, an evaluation of the Gender Equality in Schools Movement in India compared which approach had more impact: attending a programme of

group discussions on gender equality, or being exposed to a general information campaign about gender equality. (Attitudes changed more among the young people attending group discussions) (Achyut et al, 2011).

Design M&E activities to take into account the effects of external factors. Typically this requires using a control group that has not been exposed to the intervention in question or controlling for differences between participants and non-participants statistically. In practice, though, it can be hard to find a control group because by their very nature new norms and practices are spread through informal communication, which often extends outside the boundaries of project areas. Establishing a control group for media-based interventions often requires finding areas where radio or TV signals do not reach, or creating a control group statistically from non-watchers/ listeners to specific programmes.

Follow up several years after the end of a programme or project to assess sustainability of impact. Our systematic review of evaluations and impact studies of communications programmes designed to change gender norms found that most evaluations take place within two years of a programme ending, so do not capture any longer-term changes (positive or negative). This means that they generate only limited insights into how far norm changes have been sustained. One study of a reproductive health and gender norm change programme in Tanzania, for example, which followed up participants seven years after the programme ended, found that long-term changes were limited. Participants remembered some information but many had not been able to sustain new attitudes and practices in the face of strong gender norms that were resistant to change (Wamoyi et al., 2012).

Only a few studies in our systematic review examined how far changes had been sustained one or two years after an intervention; one such study in South Africa (the Stepping Stones programme, which tackles HIV and gender issues) found that one year after project activities had

ended, participants were significantly less engaged in sexual violence than the control group. But after two years, there was no difference between participants and the control group in terms of their involvement in rape or attempted rape (Jewkes et al., 2008).

If possible, use samples that will enable you to disaggregate between different social groups. Norms can vary systematically between men and women, and boys and girls, between members of different ethnic and religious groups, by geographical location, and among people of different ages and socioeconomic groups. Where possible, design your data collection activities to include a large enough sample to allow you to disaggregate (break down) your analysis. This may mean you need to seek extra funding. You can find more guidance on sampling **here**.

Keep it simple. In any M&E system, there is a trade-off between gathering enough information to understand what is really going on, and being feasible – that is, not taking up too much of respondents' time and not generating more data than you can usefully analyse. Focusing on a few selected indicators is usually sufficient, but as we have already said, you may want to complement quantitative data with more detailed qualitative information to give a fuller picture of how gender norms that affect adolescent girls are changing.

Indicators of gender norm change

Table 1 highlights some relevant indicators of changes in gender norms, with details of the studies in which they were used (you can find out the precise questions used by going to each source study). We have chosen these indicators to reflect issues that have emerged as particularly relevant in the course of our work looking at how gender norms change. It is not intended as a comprehensive list of indicators of change in the gender norms that affect adolescent girls, because the most relevant indicators tend to be developed locally.

Table 3: Measuring how gender norms change – some useful indicators and examples of studies or surveys that used them

	Issue/indicator	Used by
General attitudes towards gender equality	% of respondents stating they believe that men and women or girls and boys are equal/should be treated equally	BRAC GQAL Evaluation (Alim, 2011); Maendeleo Ya Wanawake evaluation, Kenya (Chege et al., 2001)
	Attitudes towards gender roles (e.g. who should be the breadwinner, look after family members, etc.)	Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) Gender Equitable Men Scale (GEMS)
	% of respondents stating they believe that gender divisions of labour are natural and cannot be changed	Stobenau et al., 2015
	% of respondents believing that women/ girls can do stereotypically masculine roles and vice versa	World Values Survey (WVS)
	% of respondents who believe a woman's main role is looking after her family	WVS, GREAT baseline survey
Indicators of son bias	Respondents' ideal ratio of sons to daughters	DHS, fertility surveys
	% of respondents agreeing that it is important (or essential) to have a son	DHS, fertility surveys
	% of respondents believing that a woman should go on childbearing until she has a son	Evaluation of Ishraq, Egypt (Elbadawy et al., 2013)
	Spending on clothing, education, medical care and leisure for each individual in the household	Household income and expenditure surveys (e.g. Living Standards Measurement Survey)
	% of respondents believing that sons and daughters should inherit parental property equally	Evaluation of CHOICES, Egypt (Marketeers, 2013)
Education	Ratio of girls to boys' enrolment, attendance, completion and drop-out rates at different levels of the education system	UNESCO Gender and Education, The World Bank
	Ratio of boys to girls attending private schools or receiving private tuition (if locally relevant)	Local administrative data
	% of girls, boys, men, women stating they believe that education is equally important for adolescent girls and boys	World Values Survey
	% of respondents agreeing that if money is scarce, girls and boys should have equal priority to remain in school	Singhal et al., 2004
	Parents' aspirations for their daughter (i.e. up to intermediate education, up to higher education)	Nanda et al., 2014
	Amount of time girls/boys get to study at home	Nanda et al., 2014

Table 3 (continued): Measuring how gender norms change

	Issue/indicator	Used by
Economic activities and divisions of labour	% of respondents stating they believe that household chores/work should be shared equally among girls and boys	CHOICES Nepal (IRH, 2011); Egypt (Marketeers, 2013)
	Average time spent by adolescent girls and boys on unpaid household chores, economic activities (paid and unpaid), education and leisure	Living Standards Measurement Survey, some labour force surveys, time use surveys
	Girls'/young women's control over their earnings	DHS
	Acceptability of girls/ young women working outside the home (where relevant)	World Values Survey
Acceptability and frequency of violence	Attitudes towards the use of physical violence, sexual violence or sexual harassment against girls/ young women in different situations	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), DHS
	% of girls/ young women reporting physical or sexual violence over a given period	DHS, (MICS)
	% of respondents who agree that a girl/young woman should tolerate violence to keep her family together	GREAT baseline survey; Rozan (2012)
	% of respondents who would intervene in a situation of gender-based violence	Equal Access, 2010
	% of respondents who would report (or have reported) gender-based violence	Equal Access, 2010; Hutchinson et al., 2012; Pakachere, 2007
Voice, decision-making power and mobility	Girls'/ young women's influence over household decisions	DHS
	Married girls'/ young women's influence over use of contraception/ timing and number of pregnancies	DHS, GREAT baseline survey
	Range of places a girl/ young woman can go without permission	DHS, BRAC GQAL Evaluation (Alim, 2011)
Child marriage and pregnancy	Age at marriage	DHS, MICS
	Perceptions of appropriate age at marriage	Acharya et al., 2009; Elbadawy et al., 2013
	Perceptions of who should make (or have a say in) decisions about timing of marriage and/ or choice of spouse	CHOICES, Egypt (Marketeers, 2013); Filles Eveillées, Burkina Faso (Engebretsen, 2012)
	% of girls who report having a say in choice or timing or marriage	BRAC GQAL study (Alim, 2011); CHOICES, Egypt (Marketeers, 2013)
	Women's/ girls' age at first pregnancy/ childbirth	DHS, (MICS)
	Incidence of health problems related to early pregnancy (e.g. fistula)	DHS, (MICS)
	Perceptions on whether sexually active girls/ young women can refuse sex with their partner	Some DHS

Resources

Monitoring change in gender norms and attitudes

Aspen Institute (2014) *Preliminary List of Recommended Indicators for the GNB Partnership*. **Washington DC: The Aspen Institute.** This list contains a wide range of indicators monitoring aspects of early marriage and married girls' experiences (including issues such as access to education, experience of violence) and the institutional context, and outlines data sources for each indicator.

Genderlinks' Mirror on the Media project (South Africa) features examples of content analysis for different media, monitoring how gender issues are presented.

Harper, C., Nowacka, K., Alder, H. and Ferrant, G. (2014) *Measuring Women's Empowerment and Social Transformation in the Post-2015 Agenda*. **London: Overseas Development Institute.** This briefing proposes six indicators for which data are currently available in more than 80 developing countries that would enable us to track changes in gender norms: choice over sexual/reproductive integrity; freedom from violence; decision-making ability; participation in political/civic life; equal value to boys and girls; distribution of unpaid care.

Mackie, G., Moneti, F., Denny, E. and Shakya, H. (2014) *What are Social Norms? How are they Measured?* **San Diego, CA: University of California, UNICEF/UCSD Centre on Global Justice.** This paper outlines approaches and possible questions for identifying and measuring social norms.

Media Monitoring Africa (2014) *Gender on the Agenda: Narratives of Masculinity in South African Media*. **Windhoek, Namibia: Fesmedia Africa.** This report outlines methods for researching changing gender norms as represented in the media. The study used content analysis, focus group discussions and interviews. The report highlights key aspects of the media that were analysed to explore changing gender norms, such as gendered language and male/female-centred stories.

Moser, A. (2007) *Gender Indicators: Overview Report*. **Brighton: BRIDGE.** Though this report does not specifically discuss indicators relevant to adolescent girls, it provides a good overview of the rationale for gender-sensitive monitoring, and different approaches to it. It outlines how to measure impact of gender mainstreaming, current practice on measuring specific areas of inequality, and international measurement instruments.

Nanda, G. (2011) *Compendium of Gender Scales*. **Washington DC: FHI 360/C-Change.** This report describes eight established gender scales that combine responses on a number of variables to generate overall assessments of attitudes to gender equality. For each scale, the compendium lists the objectives, types of items, number of items/subscales, example items, scoring procedures, and information on where and with whom the scale has been tested.

Paina, L., Morgan, L. and Derrienic, Y. (2014) *Piloting L3M for Child Marriage: Experience in Monitoring Results in Equity Systems (MoRES) in Bangladesh*. **Washington DC: USAID.** This report outlines lessons learnt from a baseline study for an evaluation of the impact of a programme tackling child marriage in Bangladesh.

Promundo. This website includes details on the questions from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), which can be used to develop indicators of changing masculinity.

Rozan (2012) *Evaluation Study: Working With Men and Boys on the Prevention of GBV*. **Islamabad: Rozan.** This study examines the impact of a participatory education programme on men's attitudes to various aspects of gender equality; it provides a clear list of relevant indicators of change in masculinity.

SIDA (2010) *Tool: Indicators for Measuring Results on Gender Equality*. **Stockholm: SIDA.** Section 4, 'Indicators by sector', has an extensive listing of gender-disaggregated indicators, including indicators of adolescent reproductive health.

UNESCO Gender and Education offers key indicators to monitor gender in education globally, including indicators related to access, participation, progress and outcomes.

UNESCO (1997) *Gender-Sensitive Education Statistics and Indicators: A Practical Guide*. **Paris: UNESCO.** This guide includes suggestions for indicators monitoring girls' experience of gender discrimination in education as well as issues related to access and attainment.

The World Bank provides gender indicators and country-specific data in a range of areas, including education, employment, labour forces and sexual and reproductive health.

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