



# Because I am a Girl

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S GIRLS 2014

Pathways to Power: Creating Sustainable  
Change for Adolescent Girls



BECAUSE  
**I am a  
Girl**

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Change for Adolescent Girls

*Demonstration opposing violence against women, Bangladesh, 2013.*

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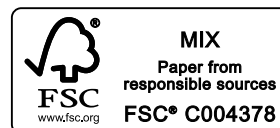
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*National Children's Parliament in Bolivia.*

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Philippines.



# Foreword

**Alice Albright** is the CEO of the Global Partnership for Education, the only multilateral partnership that unites donor countries, developing countries, civil society organisations, teacher groups and the private sector to increase global access to education and improve its quality.

Plan has been publishing the 'Because I am a Girl' reports on the state of the world's girls since 2007. Most of the reports have had a theme: education, girls and disasters, the role of men and boys in gender equality, girls in cities, girls in conflict-affected states. This report is different in that it focuses on the dynamics of power.

Unsurprisingly, the report points out that power is held by those who have had opportunity. It is accessible to those who have been allowed to pursue education and to progress through lives free from stigmas of gender, poverty, ethnicity or disability. Despite significant advancements in the promotion of gender equality, the trajectory of a woman's life is still determined as much by her gender as by the country into which she was born. There are laws about gender-based violence, equal pay and discrimination, and many young women leave schools and colleges better educated than their male peers. Even so, the makeup of top leaders hardly changes. For complex reasons, equality between men and women, as well as between girls and boys, has been elusive.

The 2014 'Because I am a Girl' Report is an attempt to understand why and what we can do to change this state of affairs, so that each person may be judged on merit alone. If inequality is structural, attitudinal and hard-wired in societies, what will make a difference? In many corners of the world, girls and young women are reminded that they are less valued than boys and men. They are vulnerable to harassment and violence and constrained by their gender into channels of behaviour and success conventionally defined as 'appropriate'. Boys and men, too, are limited by concepts of masculinity that may not reflect their own thoughts, emotions and experiences.

One theme of this report is that collective power is important, that bringing about change means men and women from across the social spectrum must challenge the status quo together, building on and working with community-based groups.

International and national laws provide a crucial framework, but grassroots activism will help change attitudes so those laws are effective. As the United Kingdom's Department for International Development has noted, "Supporting women's rights organisations... to make change and build strong and inclusive social movements is the most effective mechanism for ensuring sustainable change in the lives of women and girls."

Education plays a crucial role, because without a quality education, personal and societal change is impossible. But education is more than just going to school. The curriculum needs to reflect equality rather than reproduce the status quo. Education must also continue outside the classroom. Girls and young women need mentors and champions – community and business leaders, teachers and politicians – who stand up for what is right, not for what is accepted or comfortable. Just as critical, boys and young men must be engaged in this process. Only through an open dialogue will a more inclusive and empathic society be possible, one that allows for the fulfilment of each individual.

This generation may be the best equipped ever to make equality between the sexes a reality. Today, they have the power of a better education and of new and increasingly liberating communication tools. They also have the example of the generations ahead of them who have been fighting to achieve equal rights and equal power: power and control over their lives, to make the choices they want and to lead a meaningful and happy life. While millions of people, of both sexes, still struggle to achieve this state of affairs, the challenge remains much greater for girls and young women. It is everyone's responsibility to reshape the status quo, and this new report from Plan International is one step of many along that path.



GPE/CHANTAL RIGAUD UNDER A CC LICENCE





# Pathways to power

# 1

## 1 One step forward, two steps back – power struggles through history

*“There is still a stereotype that boys should lead. But this pushed me to perform more and better so I could be the leader – even though I was a girl.”*

Nurul, 17, Indonesia<sup>1</sup>

Power struggles through history – from the early collective action for women's votes to civil rights movements, from disability campaigns to trade union activism – are long and usually painful. The struggle for gender equality and for girls' rights – the carving out of their pathways to power – is no different. Girls' lives continue to be limited by the double jeopardy of their being young and female. This is ever more urgent as we approach the close of the Millennium Development Goals, and the redefinition of a new development agenda in 2015. In this context, with a renewed opportunity to tackle the underlying causes of poverty and inequality, there are key questions to ask: how can girls be truly empowered, and gender equality achieved? What will this mean for how power operates across the institutions in society that have influence on girls' lives? How can we accelerate sustainable, transformative change for the next generation of young women?

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### Introduction

This is the eighth annual 'State of the World's Girls' report. In previous years we have argued for girls' rights and for the kind of gender equality that would really transform the societies we live in. We have shown that there has been progress, but argued that it has been far too slow.

In this report we ask: what will shift the unequal power relations that bolster gender discrimination, injustice and inequality for girls and women in some form in every country in the world? For this reason, this report investigates the notion of power. Who holds it? Where and how does it operate? Does it always protect the status quo and reinforce existing inequalities, or can it be a force for positive change?

When Plan published the first of these 'State of the World's Girls' reports in 2007 it was difficult to find much material – and even more difficult to find data – that looked specifically at girls. They were either classified under 'women' or 'children', and there was little differentiation of their needs or their rights by age. Today, a large number of programmes and projects focus on girls, with many targeted specifically at adolescent girls. This has brought a clearer understanding of the impact of gender and age on poverty and inequality.

Many international donors are investing money in programmes based largely on what is called a strategy of 'empowerment'. But all too often, these programmes take a more limited view of empowerment, and are focused on building girls' life skills through group formation and 'safe spaces for girls'.<sup>2</sup> The outcomes of these programmes have shown promise in terms of building a girl's assets and strengthening her ability to make choices; promoting learning, and increasing her skills, knowledge, self-esteem, confidence and leadership capacity.

This focus on girls is a positive step. But girls are some of the most vulnerable members of society, discriminated against by both sex and age and often by other factors too, such as class or caste, disability or sexuality. Limited approaches to girls' empowerment will not address many of the barriers to gender equality, which are structural rather than individual. They are not rooted in a girl's lack of confidence or even skills and knowledge, but in the attitudes and institutions that deny her opportunities and undervalue her strengths and potential.

To bring about sustainable and transformative change therefore means an investment not just in girls themselves, but also a strategic shift in the external barriers that block their way to power. This involves working, of course, with girls, but also with the social institutions of families and communities and with the powerful political, economic and legal institutions that can either

*Reporting domestic violence at a police station in India.*



G.M.B. AKASH/PANOS PICTURES

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on the structural barriers that block girls' and young women's pathways to power. It looks at the way power operates within the social institution of families and communities (in all their diversity), and also within the more formal institutions of the state and the market place; at how the wider world is governed and at the role of the economy. How can power be reconstructed in these spaces so that equality – and girls – can thrive? The report also delves into one of the most influential forms of power – collective power – and looks at the importance of girls' participation and collective action. How can girls and young women be better equipped to take their rightful place in these different spaces? What example can older women give to girls? And what barriers still stand in girls' way?

In **Chapter 2**, we examine how attitudes, expectations and practices within individuals, families and communities serve to reinforce discrimination against girls and women. We show how and why the notion of female inferiority has had such a hold on the way both men and women think and act; how this supports and reinforces patriarchy

and normalises the way that power is upheld. We analyse how these ideas are reproduced down the generations, strengthened often by religion, culture and the media. We focus in particular on violence against girls and young women, unpaid care work, and child marriage.

In **Chapter 3**, we look at the more formal dimension of governance. We examine the legal and political frameworks that govern the relationship between citizen and state, and the reality of how these frameworks actually operate in the daily lives of girls and women. We argue that it is vital to increase the number of women in decision-making positions, not only because it makes a difference to the law and its practice, but also because they are role models for girls and young women. We also make the case that gender-equal governance is about those in positions of power, whether women or men, ensuring that institutions are both gender-sensitive and transparent.

In **Chapter 4**, we look at girls and the formal and informal economy, and at how, in this more public world, resources are allocated and opportunities are made available. How do the values of the global economy affect girls and young women;

promote or impede girls' access to equality.<sup>3</sup> As we noted in our 2007 report: "The layers of discrimination faced by particular groups of girls will only be changed by a combination of supportive and protective legislation and the promotion of attitudinal change."<sup>4</sup> The structural barriers to achieving equality for girls and young women need to be tackled head on if the international development community is serious about supporting lasting change for girls.

It was Hillary Rodham Clinton who pointed out that: "If half of the world's population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal and social marginalisation, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity will remain in serious jeopardy."<sup>5</sup> As the world negotiates a new framework for poverty reduction at the end of the Millennium Development Goals after 2015, it is time for a new approach to gender equality: one which addresses the question of power directly, and creates an enabling environment for all women and girls in the 21st century. Otherwise, with every step forward, there may well be two steps backwards.

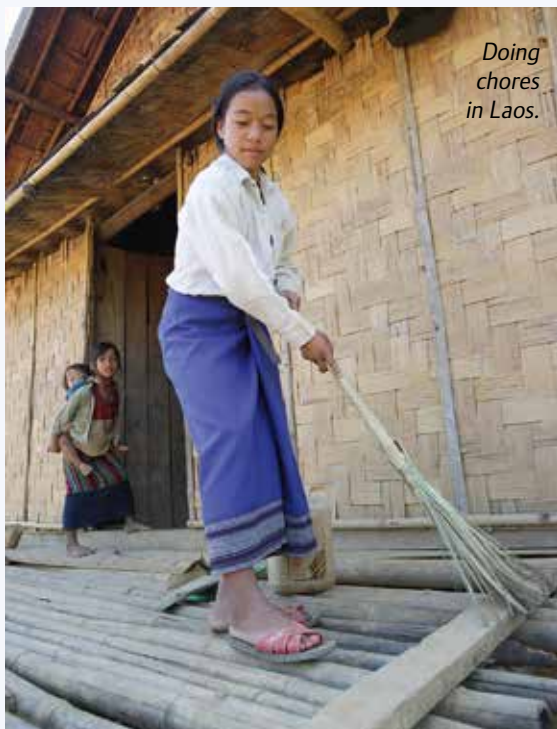


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## Gender Transformative

An explicit intention to transform unequal power relations. The focus goes beyond improving conditions for women and girls and seeks to change their social position – how they are valued in society – as well as fully realising their rights.<sup>6</sup>

*International Women's Day march in Nicaragua.*



*Doing chores in Laos.*

PLAN/JIM HOLMES

what are the choices they are able to make and the constraints they face? We look at the links between education and employment and show why the economic realities that girls face may not match up to the hopes inspired by their increased access to education. And we give examples of what can and is being done, through skills training, activism and mentoring, to bring about change, so that 'economic empowerment for girls' becomes more than just words on paper.

In [Chapter 5](#), we look at what girls and young women need to build effective and collective leadership, so that they are able to challenge violations of their rights and injustice. We look at how collective action can enable girls and young women to become a power to be reckoned with in both their private and public lives. We argue that to support girls' participation and leadership, we need more than just a focus on empowering individual girls to bring about change. We need to change society as a whole.

Finally, in [Chapter 6](#), we look at the policies and practices that need to change in order to pave girls' pathways to power. And we make recommendations to the power holders who can support that journey.



## 2 Power – how girls pay the price

*“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.”*

Alice Walker, author, poet and activist

Power affects everyone’s lives, in every corner of the earth. But the experience of power, and how it operates, is different – and often worse – for women and girls. Power can be targeted, but it can also be elusive and fluid. It can appear to change, but so often remains firmly embedded in patriarchal systems, institutions and ways of seeing the world. It is not just about the control wielded by a president or a Chief Executive Officer – power over – but it is also about the individual power of making real, not constrained, choices; the ability to make decisions about your own life (power within) and to act with others to bring about change (power to and power with). Distinguishing how girls experience different types of power is critical to understanding how power can be reconstructed in favour of equality.

Power doesn’t operate in a vacuum: it plays out in a range of institutions that touch all of our lives. Visible and invisible forms of power over girls are reproduced and deepened through society’s most powerful institutions: households and communities; the market economy, and the state. And it is girls who often pay the price for how power

is wielded by parents, community leaders, local government authorities, business practices, and legislative policy.

This report will look at the influence of different forms of power in these public and private spaces, and what this means for the prospects of gender equality and for girls and young women in particular. We will analyse the barriers that girls face in their own pathway towards empowerment. And we will focus on how to challenge and change these realities of power, with girls’ collective action as a crucial part of the solution.

*“To feel that we are not alone is important, that there are other women doing the same work as us. To share spaces together and devise actions together gives us the strength to continue.”*

Young woman leader, Central America<sup>7</sup>

The collective power of girls and young women is essential to bring about transformative and lasting change. We will focus on girls’ collective action and organising as a critical part of their pathways to power. Research for this report in West Africa acknowledges the power of legislation and policy change, but concludes that it is grassroots organising in communities, the rise of active social movements of women and girls, supported by men, that will bring about a tipping point for gender equality.<sup>8</sup>

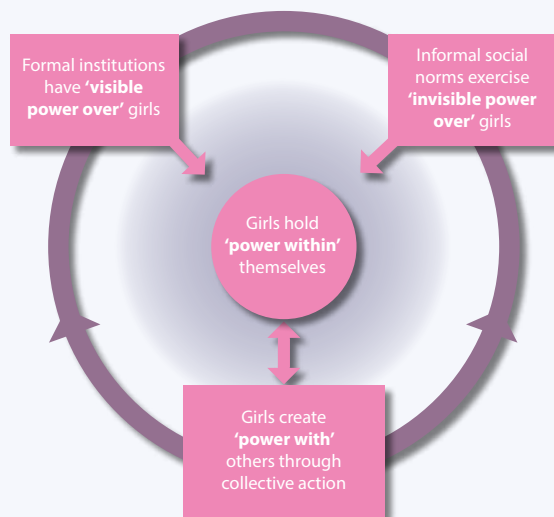


*A young girl in her wedding dress – this marriage was stopped by a local judge.*

## Power unpacked

Not all power is the same. In this report, we will refer to power in terms of four distinct types of power relations: **Power over**, **Power within**, **Power with** and **Power to**.<sup>9</sup>

Power can also be visible and invisible. These forms of power operate in different ways, and to varying degrees, in girls' lives. The diagram below



summarises the key components of power that underpin the analysis throughout this report:

**Power over** is the ability to control others, or to impose certain views, needs or desires over others. 'Visible power over' girls determines what they can or cannot do. Holding visible power over girls serves the interests of specific institutions and often ignores girls' practical needs or strategic interests. 'Invisible power over' girls determines what is 'appropriate' or 'normal' for girls to do or to aspire to.

**Power within** implies having the ability to make decisions, and the self-confidence, skills and assets to carry out decisions. 'Power within' improves girls' sense of self-worth and equips them to challenge gender inequality.

**Power with** is the ability to join with others to achieve collective goals. By joining with others, girls can create forms of power they could not have on their own. At the same time, growing 'power with' improves girls' own 'power within' and of course their 'power to'.

**Power to** involves the skills, knowledge and confidence that give girls the capacity to act collectively to challenge those with power over them.

## 3 Reconstructing empowerment

*"Don't put girls and women down and make them feel as if they are inferior to males. Empower them and let them know they can do whatever they want."*

Young woman, Australia<sup>10</sup>

This report not only looks at how different forms of power play out within girls' lives, it also tackles the all-important question of solutions: how to transform the institutions that wield power over girls, that keep them in their place, in order to build the foundations for a gender-equal world.

Discussions around power in relation to gender equality often centre on the notion of women and girls' 'empowerment'. It is an approach that can be used to reconstruct power. Social economist Naila Kabeer defines empowerment as: "The processes of change through which women expand their ability to make strategic choices about their lives and to participate on equal terms with men

in bringing about desired changes in the society in which they live." She emphasises: "It is widely recognised that empowerment is a multi-dimensional process, encompassing changes in the political, social and economic spheres of life and that these different dimensions of empowerment are closely inter-related so that significant change in one dimension is likely to generate changes in others."<sup>11</sup>

Inspired by this understanding, this report is grounded in a conceptual framework of girls' empowerment that is inherently multi-dimensional, and involves changes in the social, political and economic spheres of governance. It is based upon a holistic approach whereby change is only possible through tackling three interconnected dimensions of **agency**, **social relations** and **structures**.<sup>12</sup>

This report will show how girls' pathways to power are sustainable when supported by simultaneous change across all the institutions that surround girls:

### Agency:

Agency is the ability to define one's goals and to act upon them. Having a high level of agency implies that girls can decide what they want for themselves, set goals, and then take action to achieve those goals. Agency refers to 'power within' and also 'power with'. Increasing girls' agency is a critical part of girls' empowerment and gender equality.

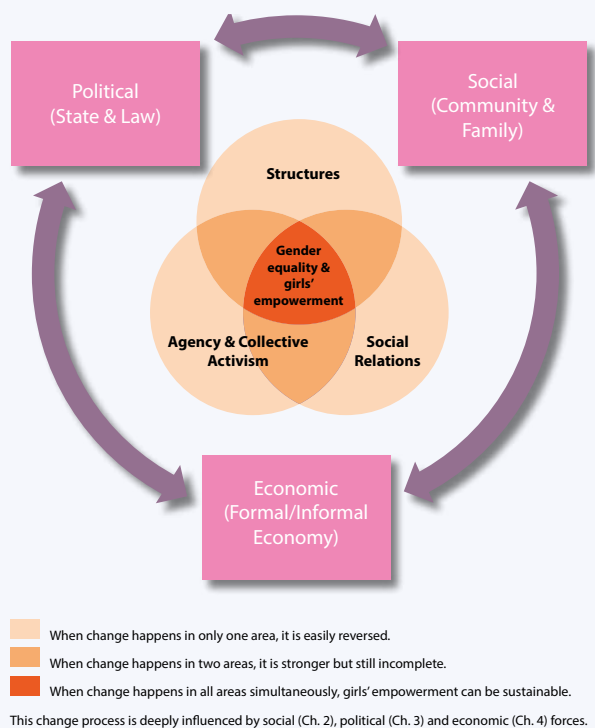
### Social relations:

These are the interactions girls engage in every day. Girls' lives are deeply affected by the gender power relations with the individuals surrounding them (peers, parents, siblings, teachers etc). Girls' ability to exercise agency is often determined by this balance of power. How girls are valued – through attitudes, norms and behaviours – is key to girls' pathways to power.

### Structures:

Structures are often reflected in deeply rooted (or systemic) norms and values and how these play out in, for example, government services, laws and policies. Structures may be visible or invisible, formal or informal. Changing structures is a key component of girls' empowerment.

### Multi-dimensional change



the social institutions where ideas are formed within the family and community, the economic institutions and the world of work, and the legal and political institutions of the state. All three areas are critical dimensions of empowerment: girls' own capacity; how girls are valued in the attitudes and behaviours of the people surrounding them; and the deep structural changes needed so that girls can exercise real choice in the way they live their lives.

## 4 The pace of change – tracking progress towards gender equality

*"If I was in charge... I would get rid of the stereotype of women having to stay at home, doing the cooking and cleaning, taking care of the kids and not going out to work. I would get everybody to see that... women can do anything and men can do anything, and it won't be seen as improper or disrespectful or wrong."*

Shoeshoe, 16, Lesotho<sup>13</sup>

The past 25 years have seen dramatic changes in girls' and women's lives in many parts of the world. Some of these, particularly in the developing world, have been rapid, as the 2012 World Development Report noted:

"The pace of change has been astonishing – indeed, in many developing countries, [the changes] have been faster than the equivalent changes in developed countries: what took the United States 40 years to achieve in increasing girls' school enrolment has taken Morocco just a decade."<sup>14</sup>

*Malala Yousafzai at the youth takeover of the United Nations General Assembly.*



ALEXANDRA KENSLAND LETELIER/PLAN



Globalisation, new technologies – including social media, where young people are leaders in the field – legislation on gender equality, increased access to education and a growing awareness of women's rights have meant that the lives of millions of girls and women have changed dramatically for the better over the past quarter century. It would, on the surface, appear that the pathways to power for girls and women are being successfully forged.

The 'Because I am a Girl' series of reports began in 2007 with the objective of marking such progress and analysing the barriers that still remain to the achievement of gender equality in the years leading up to 2015 – the target year set by the international community for meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

We are now close to that date, and it is clear that the gains that have been made are still fragile. In March 2014, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) emphasised the continuing need to prioritise gender equality and women's human rights in order to achieve sustainable development and called for a 'stand-alone goal' on gender equality – something that women's groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) agree must be a key element of the post-2015 development agenda.<sup>15</sup>

Now is an opportunity for pause and reflection, crucial before the post-2015 development agenda is finalised. A renewed focus on gender equality and a redefinition of power is deeply needed. Institutional and structural power in families, communities, businesses and governments still resides largely with men. That is why power is at the heart of this report.

But this is also an important moment, because we see the very real danger of backsliding on progress already 'achieved'. Women and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights are still highly contested; girls' access to education is under threat in some contexts, with very real perils for girls. We see day by day how the progress achieved on gender equality remains tenuous. A 2014 United Nations report noted that: "gender-based discrimination and violence continue to plague most societies" and warns that widening inequality and

a failure to strengthen women's rights is threatening progress made in the past 20 years towards reducing global poverty.<sup>16</sup>

And there is still much more to be done. The 2012 UN World Development Report identified some critical 'sticky domains' in gender equality that are yet to be successfully addressed – "segregation in economic activity, gender gaps in earnings, male-female differences in responsibility for house and care work, gaps in asset ownership, and constraints to women's agency in both the private and public spheres" persist, despite efforts to shift them. These are systemic barriers that block girls' pathways to power; they need to be tackled systematically, while in fact the approach has often been piecemeal.

This moment of pause is especially critical given the way progress towards equality has been threatened by the financial downturn in the global North and the subsequent crisis in the global economy. In countries intent on balancing the books, cutbacks in state provision have often had a negative impact on gender equality. For example, public-sector job cuts may fall disproportionately on women of all ages.<sup>17</sup> Welfare cuts, whether social protection stipends, nursery provision or care for the elderly, also tend to have a greater impact on women and girls. Cuts in health budgets leave adolescent girls vulnerable as their access to sexual and reproductive health information, and pregnancy services, declines. Increased economic pressure may expose girls and young women to taking on riskier employment and engaging in transactional and commercial sex.<sup>18</sup>

Maxine Molyneux, Professor of Sociology at University College London, pointed out that: "While almost all governments have signed up to UN frameworks on women's rights, and there have been many positive changes as a result, there has also been growing resistance to rights agendas and diminishing transnational activism in support of women's rights."<sup>19</sup> The Association for Women's Rights in Development agrees: "Experience shows that even women's rights victories that were won decades ago are under fresh threat of reversal – such as reproductive choice, access to basic education, and freedom of movement."<sup>20</sup>



## GIRLS' LIVES – A BRIEF REVIEW IN NUMBERS

*Primary education in Cambodia.*

### Changes for the better

- More girls are going to primary school – In 2000 there were only 92 girls in school for every 100 boys; by 2011, this had increased to 97 girls for every 100 boys.<sup>21,22</sup>
- 51 per cent of women above the age of 15 are participating in the labour force (in comparison to 77 per cent of men). This varies considerably from country to country – from as low as 22 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa to roughly 65 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific and sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>23</sup>
- 125 countries currently have constitutional, electoral or political party quotas to improve women's participation (as of March 2014).<sup>24</sup>
- A raft of legislation is in place to support women's rights at both international and national levels. For example, the number of states with specific legislation to combat domestic violence increased to 76 by 2014.<sup>25</sup>
- In Africa and the Middle East, 25 countries have prohibited Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) by law or constitutional decree.<sup>26</sup> In 29 developing countries with a history of practising FGM – including Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone – 25 now have laws or decrees aimed at targeting those who perpetrate the practice.

### What still needs to change

- While the Millennium Development Goals have been successful in getting more girls into primary education, many countries will still not have reached gender parity. It is projected that 75 per cent of countries will have achieved parity in primary education by 2015, but only 56 per cent in lower secondary education.<sup>27</sup> There are 65 million girls out of school, nearly one in

five adolescent girls.<sup>28, 29</sup>

- There is no country in the world where women and men have equal opportunities, equal pay or equal distribution of assets.<sup>30</sup>
- Globally, women make up only 21.9 per cent of parliamentarians.<sup>31</sup> In February 2014, there were 19 female world leaders in power.<sup>32</sup>
- On average, women hold only 15 per cent of land titles; 86 out of 121 countries still have discriminatory inheritance laws or practices.<sup>33, 34</sup>
- Across the world, over a third of women will experience gender-based violence from an intimate partner.<sup>35</sup>
- Son preference continues to prevail. In many countries, more boys than girls are born and more survive. In China, figures published by the National Bureau of Statistics showed that in 2011, there were 118 boys born for every 100 girls – one of the highest imbalances ever recorded in a country.<sup>36</sup>
- One in five women still has an unmet need for family planning.<sup>37</sup>
- Domestic work remains largely the provenance of women and girls, often on top of full-time paid work.<sup>38</sup>
- One in three girls in the developing world will be married by her 18th birthday.<sup>39</sup> If nothing is done to stop current trends, more than 140 million girls will be married as children by 2020. That is 14 million every year or nearly 39,000 girls married every day.<sup>40</sup>
- Complications in pregnancy and childbirth are a leading cause of mortality for girls aged 15 to 19 in developing countries.<sup>41</sup> Infant deaths are 50 per cent higher among babies born to mothers under 20 than among those born to women in their twenties.<sup>42</sup>

## 5 Conclusion: the keys to power and rights

*"I have an ambition that my group will be strengthened to reach each and every girl of the community, where no women will be humiliated and have to lead a life like my mother, where no girl will get married early and be tortured by her in-laws, where no girl will drop out from school. All girls will be adored like our brothers."*

Tanuja, India<sup>43</sup>

During the eight years that we have been producing these reports, we have identified three main reasons why girls continue to struggle for their rights.

First, while legislation for girls' and women's rights continues to progress, these improvements are often fragile, and are not matched by implementation on the ground, as we will see during the course of this report.

Second, while there has been a major international emphasis on girls' and young women's education and labour-force participation, this is not enough. There is inconsistent or a lack of discussion of the structural impediments to gender equality in education and in the paid labour force. Unpaid care work and domestic labour continue to trump girls' greatest efforts in school and threaten their future in the workplace.

Third, the investment and support given to individual girls and young women needs to be matched by an emphasis on collective transformation, and attitudinal and behavioural change from adults. This involves genuine commitment at all levels.

Young people are often clearer than their parents that gender equality is a priority. In consultations for the post-2015 global agenda, children were asked about what they saw as important. Sixty-five per cent put education as their top priority, followed by violence at 53 per cent and 'equality between men and women' at 46 per cent.<sup>44</sup>

We believe that real change is possible, and that if it is to happen, now is the time to put power on the table for a new generation of girls. This report is about the barriers girls face because of how power so often functions, but it also focuses on solutions. Key examples and case studies illustrate how

power can be confronted and reconstructed for the benefit of us all.

In the final chapter, there are specific recommendations for tackling gender inequality at structural and institutional levels. As part of the post-2015 agenda, the new framework for development provides a critical opportunity to address the issue of power. Plan, together with many other organisations, is calling for a transformative stand-alone goal on gender equality. A robust understanding of, and programming for, women's and girls' empowerment that challenges and addresses the major underlying causes of both gender inequality and poverty, is crucial to the success of this new framework. The stand-alone goal should be comprehensive in its nature, systematically addressing the persistent, underlying and structural causes of gender inequality, and in doing so make girls' rights a reality in their daily lives.

Katherine Rake, former director of the Fawcett Society, the UK's leading campaign for gender equality, noted in the 2009 'Because I am a Girl' report that we are "educating a generation of girls on the promise that they will enter a world without barriers. We now need to meet that promise by offering girls and young women the keys to power so that they too can be part of the shaping and making the world of tomorrow."<sup>45</sup>

Working with the personal and the political, with all members of society and the institutions within it, targeting and encouraging behavioural change, is the only way forward for girls and young women to become active and equal citizens and to build their pathways to power.

*At school in Ghana.*



PLAN/RYANI QUARMYNE





# Attitudes, ideas and values – the inequality of the everyday

# 2

## CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

### Article 3

Women are fundamentally equal with men in all spheres of life. Countries must take measures to uphold women's equality in the political, social, economic and cultural fields.

## 1 Introduction: girls kept in their place

*"The biggest challenges that women and girls face... are related to the attitudes, practices and... ideologies that are deeply engrained in the traditions and social norms of each country."*

Plan International, research in West Africa for this report<sup>1</sup>

*"If you give birth to a girl she is called eitawo [a source of income in the form of dowry or sugar]; a boy is referred to as emundhu [gun] or ozzaire ekirowa [landmark]. So girls are less valued [than boys] and this pushes them back even harder."*

Gorreti and Nusura, focus group discussion in Uganda<sup>2</sup>

As we have seen in Chapter 1, despite extensive legislation and years of campaigning, girls and women in many countries still face sexism, discrimination and violence. The idea that women are subordinate to men, and that men and women have completely different roles and responsibilities, is picked up by girls and boys from the beginning of their lives and continues to be reinforced – within the family, the local community, at school, through the media and in the church, temple, mosque or synagogue. In many societies girls are seen as property; they go from being economically dependent on their fathers to being economically dependent on their husbands. Their lack of economic independence, or empowerment, means that they stay subservient. Girls are simply 'less valued' than boys.

The impact of this gender inequality is far-reaching and pervades the social institutions which structure girls' lives in both private and public spaces. These norms are not easily changed, as the World Bank points out, "because they are widely held and practised in daily life, because they often represent the interests of power holders, and because they instil unconscious learned biases".<sup>3</sup>

Research for this report about women and girls' access to decision-making in nine West African countries also notes that: "The overwhelming majority of these societies are patriarchal in nature, with women playing a subordinate role to men and in cultural and social terms, not always receiving the same rights as men, even when they are legally entitled to them."<sup>4,5</sup>

### **CROSS-COUNTRY RESEARCH STUDY: ACCESS BY GIRLS AND WOMEN TO DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN WEST AFRICA AND CAMEROON<sup>6</sup>**

The overall aim of Plan's cross-country research in West Africa and Cameroon, cited throughout this report, was to gain a better understanding of girls' and women's access to decision-making processes across the region, in order to provide evidence-based programmatic and policy recommendations. The study covered Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo as well as Cameroon, and focused on identifying the socio-political and economic factors obstructing or facilitating girls' and women's access to decision-making, as well as investigating what types of role models and community groups worked to engender their empowerment. This process involved an in-depth literature review, an in-depth country study in Togo, interviews with 31 key informants with extensive professional experience in the relevant areas, 51 focus groups with 306 participants, detailed analysis of secondary data, and six country case studies.

In most, if not all, societies, power is patriarchal, reflected in men's and boys' public and private power over women and girls. However, men do not necessarily benefit from patriarchy, which forces them into narrow definitions of what it means to be a 'real man'. Michael Kaufman, co-founder of the White Ribbon campaign of men against violence against women explains: "Men enjoy social power, many forms of privilege, and a sense of often-unconscious entitlement by virtue of being

male. But the way we have set up that world of power causes immense pain, isolation and alienation not only for women, but also for men."<sup>7</sup>

He goes on to say that although men are not systematically oppressed, as women are, "men's worldly power – as we sit in our homes or walk the street, apply ourselves at work or march through history – comes with a price for us. This combination of power and pain is the hidden story in the lives of men. It is men's contradictory experiences of power."<sup>8</sup> Patriarchy undermines both men and boys, who struggle to live up to its demands and women and girls, who internalise a sense that they are the second sex. However, patriarchy, like power, can and has changed. This change starts in the private social institutions of the home, the school and in the relationships which shape girls and boys as they grow into adults.

In this chapter, we examine how the values, attitudes and expectations of everyday private lives and relationships serve to reinforce sexism and discrimination against girls and women. We also examine the impact this has on men and boys. We show how and why the notion of female inferiority has such a hold on the way both men and women think and act and how these ideas are reproduced down the generations. We look at the internalised attitudes, the socio-cultural norms and beliefs which inform the skills girls learn, the choices girls make and the pathways they take.

Power, and how it is exercised in the informal social institutions in which we are brought up, may be less visible, more insidious, than the power of the state, the law and the

*Regional  
community  
officials meet  
in Niger.*



DAVID ROSE/PANOS PICTURES





economy which is examined in later chapters, but it is no less important. It is present in very many different ways: in the images we receive through the media, in the way a girl's roles and responsibilities at home prevent her from succeeding at school and mean that she is seen, and sees herself, as only capable of household and domestic work; and in the prevalence of violence against girls and women everywhere in the world.

There is no easy answer to tackling the entrenched gender inequality of the everyday. In this chapter we argue for transformative change; a fundamental alteration in power relations which can only be achieved by working with girls to build their capacity, with families and communities to change values and attitudes, and with institutions to implement laws, policies and public services that support and protect girls. We examine what factors need to be in place to bring about change to the way power operates in the everyday social realm, and show what is being done to challenge the sexism, discrimination and gender-based violence which prevents so many girls and young women claiming the equality that is theirs by right.

## 2 Everyday Sexism – ‘the past cannot be changed but the future can’

*“In schools they need to address sexist attitudes from a very young age. The past cannot be changed really but the future can.”*

Young Australian woman<sup>9</sup>

When Laura Bates started an online project called ‘Everyday Sexism’ in the UK in 2012, she had no idea of the response that it would gather.<sup>10,11</sup> But one year on, the project had spread from the UK to 15 countries and there have been more than 50,000 entries.<sup>12</sup> The stories that women and girls tell cut across geography, race and class. They are shocking evidence that all across the globe, negative attitudes towards girls and women are still widely prevalent. Bates noted: “I have been asked what has shocked me the most since starting the project. I think people expect me to say that it’s the stories of rape or violence. Those stories angered and devastated me, of course, but nothing has shocked me more than the thousands of entries from girls under the age of 18.”<sup>13</sup>

*Billboard by Médecins Sans Frontières, the Ministry of Health & Social Welfare in Liberia and the Medical Renaissance League, Liberia.*



PLAN/ALF BERG

- A girl in Pakistan described hiding sexual abuse for the sake of 'family honour'.
- In Mexico, a university student was told by her professor: "*Calladita te ves mas bonita*" (you look prettier when you shut up).
- In France, a man exposed himself to 12- and 16-year-old sisters as they tried to picnic in a public park.
- A 16-year-old girl in Moscow was groped by a man as she stood unable to move on a packed subway train.<sup>14</sup>
- In Germany, a young woman had her crotch and bottom groped so frequently she described it as "the norm".<sup>15</sup>
- A 16-year-old in Brazil told of being sexually harassed constantly by her male teacher, who would try to massage her classmates' shoulders and touch their hair.<sup>16</sup>

Everyday sexism is clearly a global issue. A 2014 online survey commissioned by Plan Australia of girls and young women aged 14 to 25, as part of the Because I am a Girl campaign, found that most of the 1,000 respondents said they had experienced sexism themselves.<sup>17</sup> They also said that it was having a significant and negative impact on society.

- Over three-quarters said they had received a sexist comment.
- A similar proportion believed that sexism is having some or a very big negative impact on females in Australia.
- Almost half said it is having some or a very big impact on them personally.
- Almost 40 per cent believed that sexist attitudes in Australia are still increasing.
- Almost a third of girls say they regularly see advertising or other media that makes them feel uncomfortable as a girl.
- Only one in four believe men and women are equally valued in Australia.

## CHALLENGING RESISTANCE TO GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN YEMEN<sup>18</sup>

The challenges facing girls in Hajjah, in Yemen, are enormous. CARE worked with communities and girls themselves in order to increase girls' participation.

Hajjah is one of the poorest regions in Yemen, with illiteracy rates at 85 per cent for girls and women, and 73 per cent of girls dropping out of school. On average, girls are forced into marriage at the age of 12. Restrictive attitudes have long prevented them from taking part in any school or community activities.

Between 2008 and 2011, CARE undertook a holistic programme of work to foster increased participation of girls in extracurricular activities and civic action. A crucial strategy for the project's success was to foster an enabling environment in the community prior to starting any activities with girls themselves. For over a year CARE met with community leaders, eliciting the opinions and cooperation of the community at large, and training schoolteachers and directors. For example, in Algarob, the mosque imam conducted an awareness campaign emphasising how women were half the community and that addressing their needs was important and legitimate.

Next, boys and girls aged 10 to 14 years were given life and leadership skills. Student councils were activated in which both boys and girls became class and student presidents. Girls took on roles as support teachers and community library managers – roles which were unimaginable prior to the project. Parent-school committees, which are mandated in the Yemeni education system but rarely functional, were also formed. These got parents involved in the education of girls and wider school affairs.

Rana, aged 16, explains the difference this has made to her life: *"I used... to spend my whole day doing house chores. I can now set my priorities. My way of dealing with my family and friends has improved, too. Before, I used to have fights with them. Now I listen to their advice with respect. I can also now differentiate between what is good and what is bad for me. Also, I can read!... I hope in the future... I can go to other communities and help other girls."*

Most encouragingly, these changes have lasted beyond the end of the project. Of course, challenges also occurred. Resistance arose from some in the community, often in the form of rumours about what the activities entailed, especially where engagement of boys or the wider community had been less strong. Whilst the Yemeni national authorities are not currently promoting more widely the strategies CARE used, it is possible to imagine that, with reform of ministry of education policies at national level, similar efforts could one day be scaled up across the country.

Doing homework in Yemen.



GIACOMO PIROZZI/PANOS PICTURES

### 3 Where are the girls? Discrimination within the family

*"In every part of the world, families and societies treat girls and boys differently, with girls facing greater discrimination and accessing fewer opportunities and little or sub-standard education, healthcare and nutrition."*

Graça Machel, International Advocate for Women's and Children's Rights, President of the Foundation for Community Development<sup>19</sup>

*"I think that being a girl in Jordan has restricted our freedom a little bit, because we always have to think about the things we want to do before we do it, because of our reputation, because of... people talking about us. When any girl makes a mistake they always blame her, not like a boy."*

Mira, Amman, Jordan<sup>20</sup>

In 2007, the first 'Because I am a Girl' report noted that: "Inequality between boys and girls remains deep-rooted and starts early." Despite many other changes for the better, this deep-seated structural inequality continues today. For example, in Uganda, a key informant for research into adolescent girls and gender justice carried out by the UK's Overseas Development Institute noted, "Within the first seven years of life, girls are already indoctrinated into the idea of being subject to men. This starts in the household and is reinforced in the community."<sup>21</sup>

In fact, there is strong evidence that this kind of discrimination against girls and women begins even in the womb. Biologically, there should be 105 boys for every 100 girls in the world. But in an increasing number of countries, the ratio is being seriously skewed, with as many as 110 to 120 boys to every 100 girls.<sup>22</sup>

The underlying reason is quite clear – parents want sons, not daughters, and are prepared to go to great lengths to achieve this end. This value placed on sons affects not just the unborn daughters but also their young mothers. As this 16-year-old Hmong girl said: *"My husband will abandon me if I give birth to two daughters."*<sup>23</sup>





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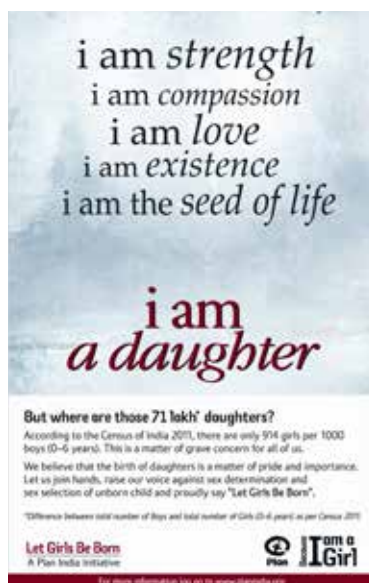
In the past (and sometimes still today) this son preference meant giving away baby daughters or leaving them to die. In a recent twist, the technical ability to know the sex of a foetus (for those who can pay) means that in many countries, including India, sex selection continues despite laws against it.<sup>24</sup>

Rita Banerji is founder of the 50 Million Missing campaign in India.<sup>25</sup> She says that a baby girl “becomes a resource pawn in [the] patriarchy – you can buy her, sell her, kill her, keep her.”<sup>26</sup>

In South Korea, however, they have managed to turn the negative sex balance against girls around. In 1990, the country recorded 116 boys being born for every 100 girls – the most distorted ratio in the world at the time.<sup>27</sup> By 1992 it had risen to 117. But then the trend went into reverse – and fast. By 2000 it was down to 109 boys per 100 girls;<sup>28</sup> and now the figure is almost down to normal levels at 107.<sup>29</sup>

This was achieved by a combination of factors, including public-awareness raising – for example, as Oh-Han, an advocate for women’s rights, explains: “One TV public advertising campaign focused on a class of 10 to 14-year-olds and pointed out how many of the boys would be left without a female partner when they grew up.”<sup>30</sup> The government took early steps to combat the use of ultrasound and other technologies to determine the sex of a foetus, including restrictions on when they could be used. Those practitioners who transgressed these restrictions were heavily penalised: in 1991 eight physicians had their licences suspended for performing illegal sex selection procedures.<sup>31</sup> The change

was also supported by other factors; not least an improvement in girls’ education and increasing urbanisation which meant jobs, and added earning power, for women.<sup>32</sup>



## CHANGING MINDSETS – SEX RATIOS AT BIRTH IN VIETNAM<sup>33</sup>

**Lili Harris** investigates why so many more boys than girls are being born in Vietnam.

In recent years Vietnam has been the only country in South-East Asia to experience a rise in distorted sex ratios at birth, and the one where gender preferences have so clearly been translated into demographic imbalances. The ratio of boys to girls at birth was at standard levels in 2000 (106.2 male births for every 100 female), but by 2009 the census reported an increase to 110.6 males per 100 females. In some areas, such as the Red River Delta region near the capital, Hanoi, 115 or even 120 boys are born for every 100 girls.

If this continues for two further decades, Vietnam will face serious demographic, socio-economic and political problems, and could also face an increased possibility of early and forced marriage, and a rise in trafficking and sex work – which means a greater risk of violence against girls and young women.

The unequal sex ratio at birth is significantly higher among births of third children (at 115). This suggests that families may be more likely to resort to sex-selective abortions when they have already had one or two children, or have already given birth to girls.

The distorted ratio increases with the mother's education level; the variations range from 107.4 for illiterate women and 107.1 for women with a primary education and below, to 111.4 for women with secondary education, and up to 113.9 among mothers with college level or higher education.

Census data also showed that more boys than girls are born to richer couples. This would indicate



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that despite being illegal, sex selective abortion is widely available, highlighting the gap between legislation and implementation. And raising the issue that as prosperity increases, so may sex selective terminations.

Phan Thi Thu Hien from UNFPA in Vietnam notes that: “to address root causes you have to address mindsets, and help service providers to promote an ethical code of conduct. We see that there is a link between gender-based violence and the unequal sex ratio at birth. We need to involve men and boys to accept responsibility... Sometimes there is also pressure from the wider family and community, so we have not only targeted women and men but also young married couples who haven't had any children yet, parents-in-law, and religious leaders.”



*Parenting class in Vietnam.*

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## 4 Back in the kitchen – unpaid care work

*"Some parents will not allow girls to have higher education because when they marry they will go back to the kitchen."*

Yuliana, 16, Indonesia<sup>34</sup>

*"The majority of men fear to do home activities because they think they will be laughed at."*

Boys, 12 to 14, Rwanda<sup>35</sup>

Although women have moved into paid work in unprecedented numbers, in most countries women and girls continue to do the majority of the unpaid work in the home as well. And this has a negative effect on their education and future employment prospects. Research for this report in 13 countries in West Africa states, "a primary way in which women are held back from attaining positions of autonomy and respect is the daily duties and routines that men rarely face. Domestic work for women and girls, especially in rural areas, is not remunerated, let alone always valued." Household tasks keep women and girls at home and make it hard for them to take part in community activities, or be available for better paid work in the formal sector. These daily domestic duties serve to reaffirm girls' inferior status. The low value placed on domestic work in general means that boys don't do it.

A paper for the Young Lives study of childhood poverty found that in Andhra Pradesh in India: "The burden of paid and unpaid work [falls] disproportionately on girls, who spend nearly an hour and a half more [than boys] working per day."<sup>36</sup>

Apparently, doing the washing or cleaning or even the childcare somehow makes a man seem less of a man. As this older man in Uganda said: "God created us differently, the men and the women. That's why culture also treats us differently. It is government that is spoiling things. How can my son cook, bathe the children, wash my clothes or fetch water when the women and the girls are there? How can my wife build the hut when her sons are there? Can I call my daughter to help to slaughter a cock when God blessed me with all these sons? God would curse me if I did."<sup>37</sup> The Overseas Development



Institute research report also notes that: "Mothers themselves were opposed to the idea of their male children participating in cooking, childcare or related chores, intimating that this was actually taboo."<sup>38</sup>

Research in Jordan found that "if a woman succeeds in enlisting the support

Burkina Faso.

### What is unpaid care work?<sup>39</sup>

It is not always easy to distinguish between unpaid care work and other types of unpaid work – for example, subsistence agriculture or working for a family business. For the purposes of this report, 'unpaid care work' refers to the work done within households for other members of the family, household or community. It is a more accurate term than the commonly used one of 'domestic labour', which often breeds confusion about the difference between unpaid care work and the paid work done by domestic workers.

It is also different from the idea of 'reproductive work' which can refer to both unpaid care work PLUS giving birth, breastfeeding and child-rearing. Each word in the term 'unpaid care work' is very important to understand:

- 'Unpaid' means that the person doing the activity receives no financial compensation or wage for the work;
- 'Care' means that the activity serves people and their wellbeing;
- 'Work' means that the activity has a cost in terms of time and energy.<sup>40</sup>



of her father, brother or husband, dealing with other challenges becomes easier. It is significant to note that male family members' objections are not related to how economic participation reflects on the woman herself, but on them as men. They view it as an indicator of their inability to support women. This is owing to a firm belief (wrong belief) that men alone are responsible for the financial support of women."<sup>41</sup>

So it is good that there are an increasing number of campaigns that aim to address men's views about women working. For example, MenCare is a global programme in 25 countries that is working on the issue of men's involvement in unpaid care in the home as a way of encouraging women into paid employment and at the same time promoting gender equality.<sup>42</sup> Steven, from Sri Lanka, speaks of his struggle to come to terms with being the primary carer for their two children while his wife works abroad, and adds: "Now I have realised what wives go through every day. When my wife is doing housework, we'll do it together. My thinking was that I would earn money and everything else was her responsibility. I don't feel that way any more. Of all the things in the world that money can't buy, one is the love of a child."<sup>43</sup>

It is very easy to underestimate the impact that women having the major, and often sole, responsibility for the domestic sphere has on girls' ability to exercise choice or have any power over their own lives. They are confined by the home and define themselves by their role within it, as their families and communities define them. They lack the time for school work, or to learn the skills of social interaction and make the networks and contacts that might take them into a more public life and would also enhance their chances of better-paid work. At home, everybody has power over them, which in turn limits the power they have within themselves, to make the connections for collective agency that might bring about change. Girls in this context will struggle, with no voice, choice or control, either to recognise or realise their potential.



MENCARE: A GLOBAL FATHERHOOD CAMPAIGN



PLAN/ERIK TAL HAUG

If girls and boys are to be able to challenge the ways that they are 'supposed' to behave, if ideas are not to be endlessly reproduced down the generations, then support needs to come not only from parents and the community, and from programmes like MenCare, but also from the institutions of the state, part of the multi-dimensional process referred to in Chapter 1.

Vietnam.

Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, notes that: "Public policies should position care as a social and collective responsibility rather than an individual problem, and treat unpaid caregivers and those they care for as rights holders... Addressing care responsibilities is thus an essential component of the obligations of States to ensure gender equality at home, work and in society more broadly."<sup>44</sup> And Lana, aged 16, from Brazil, says: *"If I were President I would enact a law for equal rights, a law saying that women and men could do the same things. If she cleans the house, he can do it too; and if she can cook, he can do it too!"*<sup>45</sup> But, as in so many cases, laws and policies will struggle to be implemented when the rituals of daily life and the attitudes and ideas held for generations remain unchanged.

## 5 In the name of culture

There are a number of other important areas in many girls' and young women's lives where in theory there is legislation which should uphold their rights, but in practice there are embedded cultural, social and religious norms and behaviours which conspire to prevent change. Child marriage, despite being illegal in many countries where it is practised, is a prime example.

Fourteen million girls under the age of 18, the official age at which a child becomes an adult under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, are married each year.<sup>46</sup> Child marriage, often to an older man, not only deprives a girl of her childhood, and often her education, but is the source of countless rights violations for girls, particularly during adolescence.<sup>47</sup> Becoming pregnant and giving birth before her body is fully mature is a leading cause of death for girls aged 15 to 19.<sup>48,49,50</sup> In addition, studies have found that because of the power imbalance, such marriages can lead to high levels of domestic violence – for example, a survey in India found that girls married under 18 experienced twice the levels of violence, and younger girls three times the levels of those married when they were older.<sup>51</sup>

Underpinning child marriage is a combination of poverty, gender inequality and a lack of protection for children's rights. This is frequently compounded by limited access to quality educational and employment opportunities and reinforced by entrenched social norms. Girls from the poorest 20 per cent of households are over three times more likely to marry before they are 18 than those from the richest homes.<sup>52</sup> In developing countries, girls in rural areas are twice as likely to be married by 18 as those in urban areas.<sup>53</sup>

Mothers – and fathers – who put their daughters through child marriage may do so because they think this is the best way of ensuring their future. They believe that by marrying girls early, they protect them from men, and from relationships and pregnancy, wanted or unwanted, outside marriage. In poor families in particular, child marriage may ensure that a daughter is married to someone with enough money to feed her and sustain her children.

This means that campaigners for change, particularly when they themselves are

young women, have a difficult time. When Nurul, aged 17, from Indonesia, started campaigning against child marriage in her village, she said: *"Initially my friends, and also the village elders, mocked what I do. They often said 'what's that all about anyway?' or even 'get lost!'. I think that was only natural because they are used to the old ways and without sufficient knowledge and information. There are also those who say 'be a good girl and stop minding others' business'. It was not easy, but I made those comments my motivation to keep on working and campaigning. I tried to think positively all the time."*<sup>54</sup>

In 2011 the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) conducted a review of global programmes on child marriage that had been evaluated, identifying five key successful approaches:

- Empowering girls with information, skills and support networks.
- Educating and mobilising parents and community members.
- Enhancing the accessibility and quality of formal schooling for girls.
- Offering economic support and incentives to girls and their families.
- Fostering an enabling legal and policy framework.<sup>55</sup>

As a result of these approaches, change is happening, and some countries have had significant success. As Savitha, aged 14, from India, points out: *"To stop this inhuman attitude towards girls, there should be stringent laws against the practice of child marriages, and both the governments and the civil societies should initiate awareness-raising campaigns in every community on gender equity and the evil consequences of child marriages."*<sup>56</sup>



Nurul receiving an award for her campaigning work.



## ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY IN NICARAGUA

From research by Dr Margarita Quintanilla from InterCambios, specialist in adolescent girl pregnancy

*"When I had my baby girl people would say 'Look! A little girl cradling another little girl!' I was so ashamed."*

Girl, 15, Chontales, rural Nicaragua<sup>57</sup>

Child marriage has been identified both as a factor in maternal mortality and in school dropout, but in some countries in Latin America it is child and adolescent pregnancy that is the overriding issue. Research in Nicaragua, which currently has the highest rate of adolescent pregnancy in Latin America, shows that the impact on girls' lives – on their educational and employment opportunities, their health and wellbeing – should not be underestimated.<sup>58,59</sup>

- Between 2007 and 2010, one in every hundred live births was to a child mother, below 14 years of age.<sup>60</sup>
- A total of 13,180 young women aged between 10 and 14 gave birth between 2000 and 2009.<sup>61</sup>

- In 2011, 25 per cent of all births recorded in Nicaragua were to mothers aged 15 to 19 years old.<sup>62</sup>
- From 2006 to 2011, following the ban on therapeutic abortion, there has been a 10-per-cent increase in adolescent maternal mortality.<sup>63</sup>

It is the poorest areas with the most disadvantaged ethnic groups which have the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy. Violence and lack of affection in the home are also implicated; one study carried out in rural areas of Nicaragua highlighted the problem of domestic violence as a major risk factor for young women aged between 10 and 16. Adolescent girls who experience domestic violence were eight times more at risk of becoming pregnant than those who were not abused by their families.<sup>64</sup>

Coercion, rape, inequality and poverty all play their part, but it is the young mother and her child who bear the brunt. According to statistics from the Supreme Court of Justice, two out of every five cases brought to the family courts in 2010 were lawsuits demanding that fathers contribute to the costs of feeding their children.<sup>65</sup> Fathers are more noted by their absence and child-rearing is in any case seen as 'women's work'.<sup>66</sup>





Billboards by United Nations in Liberia, the Ministry of Gender & Development in Liberia and the Women's Campaign International, Liberia.

## 6 'We cannot accept that men beat women' – challenging violence against women and girls

*"We cannot accept that men beat women. That was before, in old days, when women could be treated so. But it is not the right way to treat any person. It is not how women should be treated. Times are changing. Let us also change."*

Goze Martine, Ivory Coast<sup>67</sup>

*"Married women can only go to heaven on the heels of the husband. A married woman should not complain – only at the point of death – and even then you should exercise patience. No matter what your husband asks you to do, please do it and you will be rewarded by Allah."*

Young Hausa woman, 22,  
Nigeria, married at 15<sup>68</sup>

Despite years of legislation and campaigns against it, violence against women by men continues to be pervasive, cutting across geography, age, class and race. A 2013 report by the World Health Organisation found that more than one in three women around the world has been raped or physically abused – not by someone they did not know, but 80 per cent of them by a partner or spouse.<sup>69</sup>

Violence is a key tool in the exercise of

power. For too many girls and boys it is part of their everyday life; sometimes to such an extent that it is seen as acceptable and no longer shocking.

In Plan's research for the 2011 'State of the World's Girls' report, 64 per cent of 1,572 male and female adolescent respondents in India and 66 per cent of 1,227 in Rwanda, totally or partially agreed with the statement: "A woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together."<sup>70</sup>

This man from Bangladesh appears to agree: "No one should torture his wife and I do not torture my wife. But I believe that she is my property and no one should have any say in what I do for or against her. To maintain the order within the family, I have the right to control my wife with whatever force is required to apply."<sup>71</sup>

Tolerance of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) by men and women in society makes it very difficult to enforce laws against it. Women and girls may be afraid to speak out, men may know that they can get away with beating their wives, partners and children because no one will challenge them. A recent study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights notes that there is "systematic under-reporting of violence against women with only 14 per cent of women reporting their most serious incident of intimate partner violence to the police".<sup>72</sup>

So what drives men to feel that they need to show their power over women in such a brutal way? Peace Ruzage from the non-governmental organisation Aspire Rwanda thinks: “The problem of violence against women in Rwanda, as with many African countries, is rooted in the cultural beliefs and notions of masculinity reinforced through generations.”<sup>73</sup> And research supports this view – a study by the International Center for Research on Women and Instituto Promundo found that those men who held attitudes most inimical to gender equality were also those who were most likely to report having used intimate partner violence (IPV).<sup>74</sup>

Men’s use of violence against women is something girls grow up with. Both a man’s use of violence and a women’s acceptance of it may be the result of lessons learned at home, in the wider community and in the media, but it does come down to a fundamental exercise in *power over*. It may be the only way of feeling powerful that a man has. A UN study in Asia and the Pacific noted that underlying gender inequalities and power imbalances between men and women “are the foundational causes of violence against women... men’s use of violence against women is also associated with a complex interplay of factors at the individual, relationship, community and greater society levels. These factors cannot

be understood in isolation and should be understood as existing within a broader environment of pervasive gender inequality. Consequently, simply stopping one factor – such as alcohol abuse – will not end violence against women.”<sup>75</sup>

Increasingly, there are organisations and groups that work with men to prevent them using violence against their wives. For example, Rwanda Men’s Resource Centres (RWAMREC) works at the grassroots, running awareness programmes about gender equality and violence against women for men and also working in the community. Edouard Munyamaliza is its Director and he told journalist Nishtha Chugh: “Men find it easier to talk to other men and learn from their experience... Our training programme ‘Positive Masculinities’ helps them understand that empowering women does not make men subordinate to them.”<sup>76</sup> One of the men involved in the workshops is Shakya, aged 45, who used to beat and abuse his wife Hasina Nyiraminani. “The workshop forced me to rethink my relationship with my family, and whether I was a role model to my children. It shamed me,” he says. Nyiraminani too says he has changed. He has become a community leader and the beatings have stopped.<sup>77</sup>

The issue of violence against women and girls, and what can be done to stop it, is one we return to in the next chapter.



Tackling gender-based violence in Rwanda.



Championing Change, Edgar helping with the laundry.

PLAN

### CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE<sup>78</sup>

In Baja Verapaz, Guatemala, a group of young men have gathered together to try to break the macho culture of violence and discrimination towards women through a workshop-based project supported by Plan International and its partner Caja Lúdica.

Through a series of workshops involving theatre, dance and music, the young men, aged 14 to 20, are training to become gender pioneers, with the hope of shaking off the stigma of 'machismo' and spreading a message of equality throughout their community.

During the workshops, the young men are given the opportunity to talk about their attitudes towards women and girls and to address why women are seen in a certain way.

However, changing a deep-rooted cultural attitude has not been easy, says Fredy Abtres, a counsellor from Plan's partner organisation Caja Lúdica, who has been working with the young men at the workshops, which take place twice a month on Saturdays.

"In the beginning, the boys were very aggressive towards each other and didn't want to participate in the workshops. We would ask them to hold hands in a circle, but they wanted to kick or hit each other instead," says Fredy, who reveals it has been a long process.

But now a positive shift in the groups' outlook towards both men and women can be seen.

"The boys are much more collaborative and are treating one another – and

the leaders – with more respect," says Fredy. "They have changed their thinking on male-female and male-male relationships, as the relationship between men is often of a violent, competitive nature."

This project is tackling machismo from the root – and it's proving that if you really want to make a difference, it doesn't need to be done through violence and aggression – but by utilising the power of education and awareness.

## 7 The power of the media: reinforcing misogyny

Whether you live in a big city like Paris, Jakarta or Rio de Janeiro, or in a village in Zambia, the media, especially social media, but also mobile phones and traditional newspapers, magazines, radio and television, have an increasing influence on attitudes and the reproduction of ideas, especially among young people. What is reported in the media, how women and girls are depicted, has an unconscious effect on how young people grow up to see themselves.

No wonder that feminists have, for decades, complained about the images, language and role models that our daily news, entertainment and information channels bombard us with. Nowadays we have 24-hour news, online, on radio and on television, and media consumption takes up an increasing part of everyday life. Sex sells – which means that advertising hoardings and video games alike feature scantily dressed and physically idealised young women. What a young girl looks like is valued above her intelligence, skill or kindness.

As Aidan White, General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, noted, the media in general is: "full of images and cliché about women and girls. Many are relatively harmless, but some, often the most powerful, portray women as objects of male attention – the glamorous sex kitten, the sainted mother, the devious witch, the hard-faced corporate and political climber."<sup>79</sup>

Globally, news media tend to reproduce – rather than challenge – negative stereotypes about women, often only covering stories about women if they fall into the 'soft news' categories of celebrity and the arts, and restricting women's portrayal to roles of





News-stand  
in Ghana.

mothers and carers.<sup>80</sup> Despite being around half of the global population, women make up only 21 per cent of people featured in the news.<sup>81</sup> A study by the Eastern Africa Journalists Association notes that gender portrayal in the media is often “heavily skewed in favour of men”, with women portrayed as passive and weak.<sup>82</sup> If that is what they see and hear, girls learn that they are unimportant – and powerless.

The sexualisation of content is also increasingly an issue, with, among other things, the content of music videos, the marketing of clothing and accessories that sell or represent sexualised identities and the proliferation of internet sites for sexual encounters. The growth in sexualised images, and products targeted at young girls and in electronic technologies, encourage girls to “grow up too fast” and become “too sexy too soon”.<sup>83</sup>

What you see and hear in this barrage of information and images starts to condition your own expectations of who you are or should be and has a similar influence on those around you. And for this generation everything is exacerbated by the internet.

### THE INFLUENCE OF PORNOGRAPHY

The billion-dollar pornography industry is perhaps the most extreme example of the way the media portrays women. It is largely based on the submission of women, often using violence. For example, in the US, a content analysis in

50 best-selling adult videos found that 88 per cent showed physical aggression and 94 per cent of aggressive acts were committed against women. In fewer than five per cent of cases did these women show any kind of negative response, including flinching and requests to stop.<sup>84</sup>

There is evidence that pornography has an effect on sexual relationships, especially among young people. One study noted: “Men who consume pornography may expect their partners to occupy traditional female roles and be less assertive.”<sup>85</sup> Another found that: “Youth who look at violent X-rated material are six times more likely to report forcing someone to do something sexual online or in person versus youth not exposed to X-rated material.”<sup>86</sup>



In many countries, the media have also been criticised for the way they report serious crimes against girls; journalism which reflects the imbalance of power in society in a public and damaging way for the young women involved increases the suffering they have already been subjected to. For example, in Sierra Leone, the organisation LAWYERS – a collective of women legal professionals – attacked the country’s media for mass misconduct in the case of Minister Mamoud Tarawali, who was last year accused of raping a schoolgirl.<sup>87,88</sup> In contravention of the Sexual Offences Act, local media made public the name and personal details of the victim, along with her photograph, and made comments that mocked and humiliated her, as well as jeopardising her safety.<sup>89</sup> Similar infringements were made recently by media outlets in South Africa, after a schoolgirl was raped by three classmates; newspapers interviewed the victim without providing professional support and with little concern for her safety, publishing photos that could identify her, and suggesting the allegations were false.<sup>90</sup>

On social media platforms, this misogyny becomes even more public, as “once-private exchanges are there for an entire school to see, adding photos and videos to words, allowing an entire community the chance to comment on what is seen or heard or said online, and by maintaining a permanent record of all those interactions”.<sup>91</sup>

As one commentator pointed out in a background paper for this report:<sup>92</sup> “A new form of online harassment has taken shape lately aptly labelled ‘revenge porn’, where: ‘A person shares a sexually explicit photo or video with a partner, only to see those images pop up online months or even years later – typically after a bad breakup. The images are often tied to the person’s name, address and phone number. And in a particularly disturbing twist, some of the sites appear to be running side-businesses offering ‘reputation protection services’: dump \$500 into a PayPal account and maybe they will take down your photo.”<sup>93</sup>

The media are not always a negative force, however, and in Chapter 5 we will show that social media in particular can be a positive tool for girls’ and young women’s campaigning.



## 8 The role of religion in gender equality

*“Without engaging with religious communities and leaders, the enduring taboos and prejudices that work against equality and rights for women cannot be addressed.”*

Thoraya Obaid, former Executive Director, UNFPA<sup>94</sup>

Religious institutions, like the institutions of the household, the community and the media, frame the way girls grow up to be women. These faith-based institutions, despite some recent progress, tend also to be bastions of male authority, reinforcing notions of power and powerlessness already prominent in girls’ private lives and thoughts. Religion and faith can have a positive influence on gender equality, but they can also be based on conservative ways of thinking that are often inimical to girls’ and women’s rights.

However, as Plan research for this report in West Africa found: “Religious and traditional leaders are often key entry points into communities. Unless they are convinced, it is hard for women or men, let alone girls or boys, to stand against them.” In recent years, increasing restrictive religious conservatism in many countries has had a negative effect on gender equality, pushing back against the rights that women and girls have claimed over so many years. In a survey by AWID, the Association of Women’s Rights in Development, 80 per cent of women’s rights activists said they thought religious fundamentalisms have had a negative impact on women’s rights.<sup>95</sup>

In Nicaragua, María Teresa Blandón Gadea, director of the feminist group La Corriente,

said that they were “really worried about the increase in religious fanaticism. We have been working with young people for years in relation to sexual and reproductive rights. And of course we realised some time ago that one of the main obstacles to talking about pleasure, virginity, sexual diversity, abortion are the religious believers.”<sup>96</sup>

“Even if young people haven’t read the Bible, their position is that homosexuality is not normal, and abortion, losing virginity outside marriage or anal/oral sex are sins. We found out that young people are victims of those oppressive messages and the disassociation between body, pleasure and the right to decide. It has nothing to do with the law but with very deeply rooted beliefs.”<sup>97</sup>

La Corriente ran a public awareness campaign using the slogan ‘Those who abuse their power offend God’, which proved very controversial. Some advertisers, radio and television stations refused to run the campaign material, but, said María Teresa, “many people liked it, especially young people”.

“For a lot of people who took part in the activities at the campaign launch, it was very important to reflect on the differences between religious fanaticism and spirituality... The activists wanted to challenge authoritarian power in all walks of life and to create space for critical reflection which would enable women in particular to take responsibility for their own lives.”<sup>98</sup>

“This is a campaign for believers. What we say is that people can change the old ideas

PROGRAMA FEMINISTA LA CORRIENTE



*‘Those who abuse their power offend God.’*

about the authoritarian God; the God that is a father – ‘macho’, intolerant, resentful. This campaign is for people who can imagine God in another way. And that’s why it’s been successful.”<sup>99</sup>

And of course, not all religious leaders or religious groupings are determinedly patriarchal or oppressive. For example, in Togo, advocates for gender equality are using passages from both the Bible and Qur’an to promote progressive gender equality amongst religious leaders at the community level.<sup>100</sup> And in Mali, despite their initial reservations, many Islamic leaders came to understand that the implementation of a national gender policy was a question of equality and development. As a result, these religious leaders spread the positive message among their own communities.<sup>101</sup> Religion needs to be approached differently according to country and context; for example, research for this report found that: “In Senegal and Nigeria, religion plays a significant factor in national politics, but in Togo or Ghana, religion is more pluralistic and may have little influence on the national dialogue, but persist as a barrier to women in rural communities.”<sup>102</sup>

For young people, the pull between modern life and traditional mindsets is often very difficult to deal with, as the following example from Indonesia shows, and they need all the support they can get from government, family, school and community to negotiate this difficult pathway into adult life.

PROGRAMA FEMINISTA LA CORRIENTE



**Programa Feminista  
La Corriente**



## TORN BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

**Nikki van der Gaag** talks to young people in an Islamic school in Indonesia about sex, technology and gender – but the conversation takes a more traditional tone as soon as religion is mentioned...

Yuliana is 16 and clearly the spokesperson for the group of peer counsellors who have come to meet me in an Islamic school in central Java. There are seven young people, three boys and four girls, all around the same age, and we are sitting in the spacious hall outside the school's mosque.

They are keen to talk about their work; how they are trained to talk to their peers if they have any questions or problems, especially on reproductive health. And they are refreshingly open on the subject. Yuliana gives me an example: *"Yesterday a friend came to tell me that she had not had her period for two months and she was worried. She thought she might be pregnant but she had never had sex. So I told her not to worry, that she couldn't be pregnant and that irregular periods are normal at first."*

I ask the boys for the kinds of things they discuss, and Sutrisno tells me that mostly it is around "girlfriends, love, how to make a good relationship, how to deal with a broken heart" – the normal stuff of any teenager's life in any country in the world.

The importance of such counselling becomes clear when it emerges that there is no formal sex

education in school. And yet teachers and young people alike, here and in the other places I visit in Java, are clear that child marriage is a major problem. The teachers in the Grobogan school are keen to ask me if it is also a problem in the UK, and I explain that while teenage pregnancy is an issue, child marriage is not. It is hard for them to separate the two.

The group of young people go on to tell me that their lives are "totally different" from their parents' when they were young. Yuliana again takes the lead: *"Compared with our parents they were not affected by technology – now, kindergarten students already know how to use a mobile phone. We can learn a lot from the internet that our parents never knew."*

She also says that more girls are going to school, and even on to higher education, and while *"parents did not know about their rights, children now do"*. But she admits that there is still an emphasis on sons' education rather than daughters', particularly when it comes to higher education:

*"Usually the father expects that the boy will be a teacher or doctor but the girls will get married and stay at home. So parents will make an effort for their sons to get a BA but girls will stop their education after school."*



Group of peer counsellors.

NIKKI VAN DER GAAG

Yuliana.



NIKKI VAN DER GAAG

The conversation continues to discuss whether girls can be leaders. And now Sutrisno chips in, arguing that: "It is not yet appropriate for girls to be leaders – Islamic teaching says that the man is the head of the household."

The whole tone changes once he mentions Islam, even though he goes on to say that in his village a woman is the leader, because she is the wife of the leader who died. But, says Sutrisno, "the responsibility for children is the woman's role. The father provides; the woman takes care of the children."

And somehow the girls who didn't speak before now agree with him that the head of the family 'should be a man'. One of the girls, Nur, tries to argue back, saying that *"women should keep their independence, for example if the husband gets sick, who will earn an income?"*

But Yuliana, as the clear leader of the group, follows up on Sutrisno's comments to say firmly that although she expects to earn an income, she would still ask her husband for permission, because: *"In Islam the position of a man is higher than a woman, the Qur'an says that a woman is born from the bones of a man and he is superior."*

We don't make the link back to child marriage in this conversation, but Mr Sam, a local government official, tells me that with the decentralisation of government in 2001, many decisions are taken at local level. So although child marriage is against the law at national level: "The religious court will still legalise marriage when a girl is pregnant, even if she is under 16." And, he adds: "The religious court is influenced by stigma."

And these young people, for all their modernity, are still influenced by stigma and conservative religious doctrine when it comes to gender.

Yulia, the Plan Indonesia project officer who is with me, points out that she is a Muslim, yet believes she is equal to her husband, but the young people are having none of it.

Talk about reproductive health, or education, or employment or technology and they are open, engaged and lively. Mention religion, and there is only one way forward, and it is not about equality. The young people are living in two worlds – one that is about change, and pulls them forward into the future; and another which is firmly rooted in the past. Only time will tell which influence is the strongest.

NIKKI VAN DER GAAG

Sutrisno.



## 9 Conclusion: changing hearts and minds

*"Changing traditional beliefs which have been passed from one generation to another is an uphill climb because these cannot be changed overnight. What is important is that we have started on that road and we have seen positive results. We are banking on that."*

Godofredo Capara, father of seven in the Philippines and a trainer in a fathers' programme<sup>103</sup>

Changing attitudes takes more than days, weeks or months. The reproduction of ideas that denigrate women and girls have been there for millennia; shifting them may take not years, but generations.

There are a number of key factors that make a difference. Probably the most important is education. We saw in the 2012 'Because I am a Girl' report just how important quality education is for girls. When a girl goes to school it gives her knowledge and skills and allows her to make more choices about her adult life. It is good for boys too – a study in six countries found that younger men, and those with more education, had more gender-equitable views than their parents.<sup>104</sup>

So it is good news that more girls than ever are going to school, and that parents' attitudes towards girls' education in many countries are changing. Aris, age 17, from Indonesia, said: ***"In the past the difference between access to education for girls and boys was very wide. In the past 10 years this is beginning to change. Parents begin to see that it is important for both boys and girls to go to school."***<sup>105</sup> In Vietnam, one mother said: "My daughter puts many questions and exchanges many more ideas with me than I did in the past. She talks with me more than I did with my mother."<sup>106</sup>

Opening up to new ideas may also mean a change in attitude towards gender equality, especially if the curriculum at school teaches girls and boys about gender equality, building girls' confidence and skills, and also teaching boys about more equitable versions of masculinity. Respondents to the online survey for the 2012 report felt that gender transformative curricula that challenge



stereotypes is the best way of ensuring girls develop the skills they need to succeed in life. School has the potential to be a positive arena for change – for shifting power imbalances – so that girls can take this new knowledge and capacity back into the home and on into the formal public world.

On the other hand, as the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative noted: "When girls aren't encouraged to achieve, either by discriminatory treatment in classes, or textbooks and curricula that enforce restrictive gender stereotypes, achievement suffers."<sup>107</sup> In this context, education just reproduces the status quo that keeps girls and young women in their place.

It is also key to change that young women have more control over their reproductive destinies; more education about sex, more choice about becoming sexually active or not, more knowledge about reproduction and fertility, better access to contraception and sexual-health services; and more power and confidence, of course, to negotiate their sexual relationships. It all comes down to being able to realise their reproductive rights: if girls and young women are ever to be truly empowered, control over their fertility needs to be in their own hands.

We have seen from the examples in this chapter that in general the younger generation is more open to change than their parents.

*Father and his children in the Philippines.*



Many agree that this is to do with education, but it also has to do with the second important factor in changing social norms: access to technology. As this 16-year-old Hmong girl in Vietnam said: *“I want more information to open my mind, to learn more... about which university to choose, about news, about other countries, other societies – the world.”*<sup>108</sup>

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, tackling entrenched discrimination, changing hearts and minds, is possible. To do so, it is important not just to work with children and young people, but also to work with those in power – which usually means men, whether they are leaders in churches or mosques, in parliament, in the legal system or in the police. As a Ministry of Education official in Uganda commented, “I think the key strategy is working with communities, because that is where the girls come from, that is where the stereotypes are, that is where the attitude towards the education of girls is negative.”<sup>109</sup> Plan’s Building Skills for Life project does just this.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN GIRLS’ EDUCATION<sup>110</sup>

The nine countries taking part in Plan’s ‘Building Skills for Life’ programme reported that beside the lack of resources and poverty of the household, a key barrier for girls in completing lower secondary education is a lack of interest and support from parents and community members.

Increasingly, local organisations like school management committees are encouraging parents to take an interest in the education of their children. In Mali, they are involved in girls’ education issues, such as raising funds, advising girls to attend school and advocating against child marriage and sexual violence.

In Sierra Leone, a group called Teko Concerned Group for Development exerts pressure on parents and school authorities on matters that have to do with schooling. This group was founded by a 17-year-old girl. Researchers found that she plays a pivotal role in the lives of some of her peers. She advises them about the dangers of early and unprotected sex and believes that teenage pregnancy should be tackled if most girls are to complete secondary school.

As we have seen in this chapter, patriarchal attitudes are often embedded in the family, and then reinforced at school, in the community, by religious and social institutions and often by the media. It is easy to see why it is so difficult for girls and young women to have the choices in their lives that are theirs by right, and how they are pulled in different directions by the competing claims of the people, traditions and institutions that influence and often impede their pathways to power.

But in the end, change is hard to resist, because gender equality has benefits for both girls and boys. As this mother from Bhutan noted: “Equality for both [girls and boys] would make the biggest difference in the lives of our daughters and would imbue our sons with the understanding that all humans of opposite gender are the same.”<sup>111</sup> For this to happen, girls need support not only from their families, but institutional and collective support from society as a whole – and that is an even tougher challenge.

*Primary-school girl talking at a parents’ meeting.*



A young woman with dark hair, wearing a black and red patterned shawl and large earrings, holds a large green sign with white text. The sign reads "STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILD & WOMEN NOW.....". The background shows a building and trees.

**STOP  
VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
CHILD & WOMEN  
NOW.....**

# The role of the state: the bricks and mortar of gender equality

# 3

## CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

### Article 7

Women have an equal right to vote, hold public office, and participate in civil society.

### Article 15

Women and men are equal before the law. Women have the legal right to enter contracts, own property, and choose their place of residence.

## 1 Introduction: taking their rightful place in the world

*"We've built an international architecture of laws and norms to protect women's rights, but in many ways it remains a bare scaffold without the bricks and mortar needed to make those laws effective in people's lives and turn our rhetoric into reality."*

Hillary Rodham Clinton<sup>1,2</sup>

*"I feel free when my rights are respected by my parents, the leaders, and the state."*

Girl, 17, Guinea<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, we look specifically at power as it operates in the formal and public institutions of the state. It is here, in the legal and political frameworks that govern the relationships between citizen and state, that power is most visible. It can be wielded either to protect girls' rights and support their pathways to power, or to ensure that they continue to be second-class citizens. We examine the reality of how these frameworks actually operate in the daily lives of girls and women. We argue that although it is not easy, addressing governance issues at all levels of society is essential if the structural barriers to girls' and young women's empowerment are to be overcome.

We use the word governance to refer broadly to the formal or informal rules, systems and structures through which society is organised; in other words, the processes by which a state exercises power, and the social contract between the state and its citizens that should be acknowledged and fulfilled. As Martha Nussbaum and colleagues explain: "Governance is... understood to include the wide range of ways in which the political, social and administrative structure of a society



affects the access of its members to basic opportunities and capabilities... A study of governance must include not only economic management but also political participation... in both formal institutions of the state (including legislative, legal and administrative institutions) and the informal groups, movements and institutions of civil society."<sup>4</sup>

In addition, patriarchy is reinforced and reshaped all the time; progress is not always in one direction. Culture can also react strongly against change. This applies equally in governance as it does elsewhere. Evelyn Flores, a Nicaraguan human rights activist, told Jean Casey, lead researcher for this report, that: "Nicaragua is going backwards, or sideways, like crabs, instead of moving forward. Laws are reformed supposedly to update and improve them so that there is a human rights approach, but their application is done using very patriarchal criteria."<sup>5</sup>

It is in this context that we ask why, despite improvements in laws on gender equality in many countries, legislation has not made more of a difference to girls' lives. We look at the differences between the enactment and execution of different kinds of legislation when it comes to women's and girls' rights. It is important that laws exist, but it is equally important to look at how they are applied and enforced and how those speaking or interpreting law are influenced by their own views and prejudices. So we also reveal men's and women's and girls' and boys' views about legislation on gender equality and its effectiveness.

We argue that it is vital to increase the number of women in decision-making positions, not only because it makes a difference to the law and its practice, but also because they are role models for girls and young women. We also claim that gender-equal governance is about those in positions of power, whether women or men, ensuring that governance is gender-sensitive, responsive and transparent.

Finally, we give examples of what can pave girls' pathways to power, and where governance has worked for women and girls. We ask: what still needs to be done by those in power to make gender equality a reality in every country in the world, so that girls can grow up with the same choices and expectations as their brothers?

## 2 What happens in real life? Bridging the gap between legislation and implementation

*"We have two types of children's rights. One is beautifully formulated on paper and the other is what happens in real life."*  
Alexei Petrushevski, Bishkek Centre for Street Children, Kyrgyzstan<sup>6</sup>

*"You don't have to believe in patriarchy to realise that the law was made by men and is dominated by men, and that the same goes for parliament; which means that in all the making of the law, women are largely absent. It is not surprising that the law doesn't work for women."*

Baroness Helena Kennedy, QC, UK<sup>7</sup>

International human rights law clearly states that girls and women should be able to participate in public life at an equal level with boys and men. For example, Article 7 of the 1981 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) decrees that: "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country."

In the past decades, the legislative framework for international human rights on gender equality has led to significant changes within the laws in many countries – for example, 139 constitutions now include guarantees of gender equality.<sup>8</sup> However, although it can be a catalyst for reform, international law is not always binding and, in any case, implementation often lags behind

*In court in  
Sierra Leone.*



legislation. Many of the signatories to CEDAW, for example, have ratified the convention subject to certain reservations or objections.

There are also huge variations between countries in terms of the law and how it is implemented. Research for this report from West Africa found that: “While some countries retain laws that subjugate women, other countries, notably Mali, Ghana and Nigeria, have made strong advances in bringing forth legislation that promotes women’s rights.”<sup>9</sup>

We will see that legislation can help the process of social change, as these young women from Bhutan explain: *“There is less harassment of women now and men have to think twice before they divorce their wife or have extramarital affairs. Such behaviour may come with a big cost for them because of the law.”*<sup>10</sup>

But laws alone do not necessarily lead to improvements in women’s and girls’ daily lives. Even in the countries which have signed all the international conventions on women’s and children’s rights and have robust laws on their statute books, discrimination, abuse and violence against women and girls may still be rife. “Despite decades of donor-supported projects to build court rooms and train the police and judiciary, in many developing countries the reach of the formal system is very limited,” says UN Women.<sup>11</sup>

Why is this? Lack of enforcement remains a major obstacle.<sup>12</sup> In many countries there is no functioning judiciary, and no funding to make sure that laws are implemented and upheld. UN Women also identified lack of resources from the state as a key impediment to women’s access to justice systems and cited a World Bank study which found that: “In Kenya, a land claim in an inheritance case can cost up to \$780.”<sup>13</sup> For many girls and young women, these sums are completely beyond their reach.

In addition, those responsible for putting the law into practice – politicians, judges, local councillors, police – are often steeped in a mindset that inherently and often blindly discriminates against women and girls. A World Bank report noted that: “Laws may embody ideals that are quite removed from the actual choices and possibilities for women.”<sup>14</sup>

For example, in the Philippines, a national law provides for the police to establish

MARC SCHLOSSMAN/PANOS PICTURES



‘women’s desks’ in local stations and recruit female police officers to deal sensitively with violence against women and girls. Both these things have now happened, and some police officers have undergone gender-sensitivity training. However, in practice, a gender assessment found that male police officers often work on the women’s desks and were found to deal insensitively with gender-based violence. For example, they would fail to comply with regulations that stipulate that women making complaints about domestic violence should be able to do so in privacy.<sup>15</sup>

Feminist scholar Srilatha Batliwala notes: “Change from above (policies, laws) while important, cannot make gender equality a lasting reality on the ground. This is because they cannot penetrate some of the key institutional locations in which women’s subordination is constructed or practised – for example, the patriarchal cultural beliefs and practices embedded in the family and household, the clan or ethnic group, the school, the health centre or hospital, the bank, the factory and religious institutions.”<sup>16</sup>

It is on the ground that the majority of people experience the impact of governance. In theory, it is here too that girls have the opportunity to participate and to use national laws to make a difference. But translating national laws into local practice is difficult.

In many countries, women and girls may not have the confidence to go to those in authority to complain about a violation of their rights. If they come from a minority ethnic group, they may not even speak the language of the lawmakers.

*On patrol in Bhutan.*



PLAN

For example, in Latin America, many indigenous women and girls speak no Spanish or Portuguese and in few countries does the justice system provide sufficiently for translation.<sup>17</sup> “We just hear about the laws on the radio, but they do not apply in this community,” says one rural South African woman.<sup>18</sup>

Even knowledge of the law can be limited. Despite many programmes aimed at women’s legal literacy, a study by the World Bank found that many people had little or no knowledge of the laws relating to women’s and girls’ rights.<sup>19</sup> “Women in Pakistan hardly interact with the state at all; the vast majority have no idea that they have rights under the law or that policies exist to support them,” says Farida Shaheed, a sociologist in Pakistan.<sup>20</sup>

Young people tend to be more aware than their parents or grandparents, probably in part because they have had the opportunity to go to school. For example, young women in rural Tanzania knew a number of their rights: **“Yes, we all have to go to school. We can inherit property like men. Men should not beat us and, if they do, we can take them to court. We can be politicians.”**<sup>21</sup>

But such confidence on its own is not enough – even if these girls were to take someone to court, they might well face strong repercussions from their family and community.

A paper on women in senior management by gender experts Tina Wallace and Helen Baños Smith notes: “The resistance of largely male parliaments to bringing in new laws that would

implement, for example, equal access to land, equal rights in marriage, divorce, inheritance and children, provides evidence of how difficult it is to change attitudes and beliefs, and how critical it is to engage with local and cultural realities in developing these policies.”

The paper gives a number of examples in Africa, noting that it has taken 10 years of struggle for countries to pass bills against domestic violence, sexual harassment, or addressing rights in marriage. The paper notes that: “The fight between parliament and women’s rights organisations around other women’s rights, for example to land in Uganda and to abortion in Latin America... attest to continued resistance to bring about fundamental change in women’s status and women’s rights.”<sup>22</sup> These examples show clearly that effective and sustainable change happens in the interaction between structures (such as legislation), relationships (changing underlying attitudes) and agency (in this case the activism of women’s organisations).

Which is why, as we will see in Chapter 5, the work of women’s and girls’ organisations is key not only to accelerate positive change but to ensuring that existing rights are maintained.

Government ministries for women can also help to drive legislation through – for example, in Chile, the National Office for Women’s Affairs (Servicio Nacional de la Mujer, SERNAM) was instrumental in successfully pushing for laws against domestic violence and gender discrimination, including childcare for daily workers and maternity leave for domestic employees.<sup>23</sup>



## KNOCKING ON DOORS

**Nikki van der Gaag** interviews Sri Danti Anwar, Secretary of the Ministry for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection in Indonesia, about the Ministry's efforts to ensure that legislation makes a real difference to women's and girls' lives.



NIKKI VAN DER GAAG

According to the World Bank, Indonesia has managed to narrow the gender gap in some key areas of health (improved maternal mortality) and education (achieving gender parity) and improved women's political representation and introduced gender mainstreaming, but many challenges remain.<sup>24</sup> Overall, Indonesia's position on the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) has gone from 55 out of 102 countries in 2009 to 32 out of 86 in 2012.<sup>25</sup>

***Indonesia has had decentralised government since 1998. It is also a huge country. How do you ensure that national laws on gender equality reach women and girls at district and local levels?***

This is not easy. In fact, it is really revolutionary. You need to change people's mindsets. The Ministry cannot do this directly so we have to find a way to reach our policies to the grassroots. The main ministries, including ours, have come up with guidance and mechanisms to make everyone comply with national law. Of course, it needs to be strengthened but at least we have the tools to disseminate to lawmakers. There is also a women's department at each district, with a budget and a mandate. We work with them to give technical guidance.

We have both carrots and sticks. For example, we have a complaint mechanism. We can inform the Ministry of Home Affairs if we think that a law is discriminatory against women and girls. We also have a monitoring and evaluation process. Every year we send out a form to everyone to fill in the progress of policies and programmes for women and children. And every year since 2007 the president has given an award to all the government agencies, regions, or mayors who are doing this work well.

***Does Indonesia's decentralisation policy help this process?***

With decentralisation it is even more important to be participatory. We have the policy in place but if they don't know why we have this law then it is not effective – we must have bottom-up participation to make them understand in their own language, their own minds, and their own environment. So we work directly or indirectly with community organisations – women's organisations, women's studies centres, children's organisations, non-governmental organisations and the private sector. There is a forum where these groups can discuss gender

equality at regional and district levels.

We also work with the media. They play a crucial role. We have a media unit at the Ministry. We encourage the same thing at the district level. We share new policies, and every year we have a press conference informing the media of the progress we made and of the challenges we still have.

***What are the main challenges?***

First, the understanding and commitment of decision-makers not only centrally but especially at provincial and district level on the importance of empowering women and girls. The laws are in place, but this is not necessarily enough. Even people's understanding of the word 'gender' itself is often still weak. We need to show them the benefit of this is in their own institutions. We really have to go door to door selling gender equality and women's empowerment. We have to relate it to the bigger picture, to good governance.

Second, there is a high turnover of local officials because there are direct elections every year. Our challenge is how to institutionalise this in the system so that every time there is a new person we don't have to start again from the beginning. This is why since 2009 we have tried to integrate gender in the planning and budgeting system. For example, in 2011 we had 34 ministries piloting gender-responsive budgeting.

***Do you feel there is progress on gender equality?***

Definitely, although the challenges are still there. I have worked in this Ministry for 24 years. I have seen a lot of progress. We now have published data each year so we can show what progress has been made.

***What has motivated you over these years?***

You have to have a passion for this work, you can't just tell people what to do and then not implement it yourself. At home it is also important to practise what you preach, otherwise it is hard for people to follow what you suggest. I don't discriminate between my children, boys and girls.

***What is your own hope for the future?***

We have the legislation in this country; when this is in place everything is possible. People need to grab that opportunity and make their dreams come true. We will help them to do this.



Meeting with  
an Imam in  
Togo.

### 3 Who should decide? Multiple legal systems

*"We have recognised rights in the Ugandan law in terms of women's issues, but the traditional system does not."*

Woman in Uganda<sup>26</sup>

Many countries have a variety of legal systems operating at the same time. There are boundaries and overlaps – and sometimes clashes – between international human rights law, national legislation, religious law, traditional law and customs that influence how legal conflicts are being solved.

In some countries, informal justice systems are more influential than formal legislation. For example, in Malawi between 80 and 90 per cent of all disputes are processed through customary justice forums, while in Bangladesh an estimated 60 to 70 per cent of local disputes are solved through the *Salish*.<sup>27</sup>

The main issue as far as this report is concerned is the impact of these multiple justice systems on girls and women. Four key questions are of relevance here:

1. What legal provisions and arrangements are in place between national legal frameworks and religious or customary law? How does that affect women's and girls' rights?
2. Who speaks the law (priests, chiefs or judges) and is there space for them to interpret the law in ways that do girls and women a disservice?
3. What recourse can and do women and girls have when there are legal conflicts – what is the power of the law on girls' lives? Is legal recourse accessible and available?
4. What law provides the better protection for girls and women (in comparison with international human rights law)?

#### Defining multiple legal systems<sup>28</sup>

**Religious law:** most religions have rules that deeply influenced the content of today's civil laws – in many cases, unfortunately, not always in women's best interest. The big religious laws are written: Canon law, Sharia and Mishna/Torah are examples of some religious codices which have, in some places, the status of official law. In some countries, the Sharia, for example, has official status and is spoken as law by Islamic judges (Qadis).

**Customary law:** a legal practice that can be observed in a given social setting and that is considered by social actors as law. It is often influenced by beliefs – religious and others – and can be very diverse in one country; it also changes with time because it is rarely written but resides within the heads and interpretations of those who speak it. In many African countries customary law is spoken by traditional authorities such as chiefs or kings. In many countries across the world, national constitutions acknowledge customary law.

The problem comes when these laws are based on more conservative ideas about what girls and women are allowed or not allowed to do. As one report from Uganda noted: "For women, the practical difficulty with considering the traditional system as an alternative to national or international justice therefore continues to be its limitations in doing justice to women. Ugandan society, like other societies around the world, is a patriarchal society and traditions in such a society often weigh heavily against the interests of women."<sup>29</sup>

For example, customary laws may be based on community beliefs that violence against women and girls is not a rights or public issue but a private and family matter where the honour of the family is paramount. In Somalia and in other countries, a girl or woman may be forced to marry her rapist.<sup>30</sup> Or in some cases, the rapist's family will pay the victim's family a recompense: for example, a goat, or a cow.<sup>31</sup>

This is the practice in many countries on all continents. For example, in Uganda, a report notes that compensation is "often something like 'pay 800 shillings or four cows to the family of the victim if you rape somebody's wife...'. It is the woman who suffered and the husband or the family is compensated."<sup>32</sup>

In Nicaragua, Gaby Ruiz, a young feminist activist, told Jean Casey: "In some instances the honour of the family is more important than the violation; so, for example, if a girl is raped then the family might receive money or a gift of a goat to stay quiet or they marry the girl whom they have raped."<sup>33</sup> In cases like this the rights and interests of the girl concerned are ignored.

In many countries justice systems based on customary law do not recognise the equal rights of both sexes to inherit property or other assets. Research with the families of Plan's cohort of girls in nine countries confirmed that inheritance was generally seen as something that passed down the male line.<sup>34</sup> Rosamie's mother in the Philippines said: "Who should decide when it comes to giving away inheritance? Of course, the man, because he is the head of the family. I, the woman, will just follow his decision." In Brazil, Dominican Republic and El Salvador, decisions about property ownership and inheritance are almost entirely in the male

domain, with several mothers from the study confirming the presence of 'machista' attitudes towards this aspect of family life in particular. However, most families seemed unsure about the legal status regarding girls' right to inheritance, stating that 'tradition' or 'customary law' dictate inheritance rights. In Togo, most families in the survey mentioned that inheritance decisions are made according to Islamic tradition where boys inherit twice as much as girls. Among these families, land and houses are, with one exception, owned by grandfathers or fathers; mothers sometimes own livestock. Nana-Adja's father in Togo explained that: "According to customary regulations, the property is shared among all without distinction, but the boys take double of what girls get. In short, women and girls don't have the same succession rights as men and boys in the community."

But things are changing. In Plan's research this year, more parents seem to be aware of the legal situation, particularly in Benin, where recent laws have confirmed equal inheritance rights.

In Uganda, Rebecca's father confirmed how quickly things are changing, again due to recent revisions to inheritance laws. Some parents are linking the increased status of girls, through access to formal education, with their right to inherit land. Beti's father in Uganda explained, "A girl child also has a chance to inherit because they are all going to school and I think have the same abilities [as a boy]." Barbara's father in Benin added: "In my house, the split between the boy and girl will be equal as I understand that girls now have the same capacity as boys."

Legal literacy, knowing your rights, is one step on the road to change. These rights also need to be rooted in legislation, linked to wider attitudinal change, and supported by local communities, and by government and non-governmental organisations. Only then can girls' rights be realised.

*Girl with her father and sisters, Dominican Republic*





## STRENGTHENING THE POWER OF GIRLS TO OWN LAND IN RWANDA<sup>35</sup>

Aline is an orphaned teenager who lives in a small village in northern Rwanda. Since her parents passed away, Aline and her brothers have struggled with an ongoing conflict over the family's land. Her brothers insisted that as a girl, she had no right to the land. Aline knew better.

Fortunately for Aline, so did the local authorities, who explained to her brothers that Rwandan law grants sons and daughters equal rights to inherit land.

No one knows how many children were orphaned by the 1994 genocide – the 100 days during which more than 800,000 men, women and children were murdered. With so many child-headed households, land is critical for survival: 90 per cent of the population earn their livelihoods from agriculture, and 31 per cent of households are headed by women.

Without access and rights to land, Aline would have little likelihood of securing food for herself and her future children, and might have had to turn to high-risk activities, like selling sex, to survive.

New laws governing land rights are badly needed so that access to land can be implemented in a fair and equitable manner for women and men, girls and boys. Organisations like the Rural Development Institute (RDI) are working hard to support advocacy and awareness of land law reform, to help strengthen and protect the rights of girls like Aline.

The results are paying off. In Aline's case, the local authorities intervened and her brothers begrudgingly gave her a share of the family land – but still not an equal share.

Although she knows that she is entitled to more, she decided not to dispute the decision: *"That would make more trouble."*

Despite the result, Aline is happy knowing that Rwanda's new laws provide equal land rights. Before she knew the law, *"I felt that I had no value as a daughter."* But having land rights that are equal to those of her brothers has sent an important message to Aline – she does have value; though she is not yet prepared to make the sort of trouble that would give her equality.

## 4 Violence – can the law make a difference?

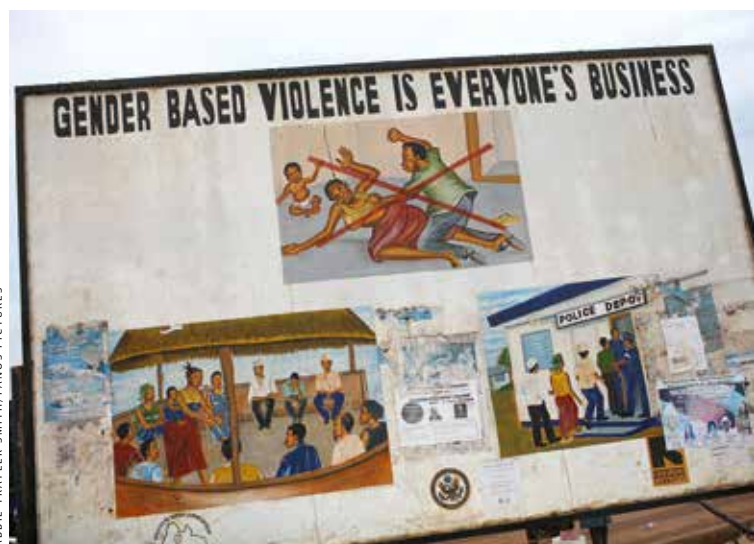
*"Beating is a crime, but a woman is like a child in the house. Like a teacher and a student, a wife needs to be beaten to make her understand."*

Court official, Uganda<sup>36</sup>

There are some areas where the state clearly does not uphold its obligations to protect women and girls. Violence is one of these. A recent report by the World Health Organisation found that more than one in three women around the world had been raped or physically abused, and over 35 per cent of women who are murdered are killed by a man close to them.<sup>37</sup>

Although the prevalence of partner violence peaks for women aged 40 to 44, much younger women experience this type of violence with overwhelming frequency. In 2013, the World Health Organisation found that 29 per cent of adolescent girls and young women aged 15 to 19 who have ever been in a relationship have experienced violence at the hands of a partner – that's over a quarter of girls and women under the age of 20.<sup>38</sup> A 2014 study in the European Union of 42,000 women found that "just over one in five women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence from either a current or previous partner, and just over one in 10 women indicate that they have experienced some form of sexual violence by

*Billboard by the International Rescue Committee, the Ministry of Health & Social Welfare in Liberia and the U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, Liberia.*



ABBIE TRAYLER-SMITH/PANOS PICTURES

an adult before they were 15 years old".<sup>39</sup>

It is clear that violence is still not being adequately dealt with by the state, the justice system or the police. Because in too many countries violence within the household is still regarded as a private matter, men may literally get away with murder.

Laws are often powerless to change behaviours because attitudes are so deep-rooted. Violence against women and girls is seen as acceptable in many countries because it is embedded in social and economic norms. Conversely, attitudes will not shift unless laws are upheld, punishments are robust and private behaviour becomes a source of public shame. But many of the people shaping the laws and running the institutions remain steeped in the patriarchal mindsets which make the violence acceptable in the first place. In some countries, they may even see violence as a 'normal' part of marriage. For example, in India, a 2009 review found that 50 per cent of magistrates who were being trained on the Domestic Violence Act believed that: "for a successful marriage, sometimes a man needs to discipline his wife", and "too much fuss is made about domestic violence".<sup>40</sup>

Not surprising then that in too many cases, in too many countries, perpetrators of violence are still able to escape their crime with impunity. "Just show me, please, a man who has been punished for his violence – no one," affirmed a man from Moldova. In, Fiji, a village man said the laws "may be implemented in towns and cities, but not here".<sup>41</sup>

- In Sierra Leone, of the 6,591 reported cases of domestic or gender-based violence in 2013, a mere six per cent resulted in conviction, according to police statistics reported online.<sup>42</sup>
- In India in 2011, despite a 2006 law against domestic violence, 73.6 per cent of 15,423 rape cases that actually made it to court were acquitted.<sup>43</sup>
- A national study of violence against Dalit (formerly known as 'untouchable') women in India based on 500 cases found that in 40.4 per cent of the cases, the women did not even attempt to obtain justice. Only in 13.9 per cent of cases was appropriate police or judicial action taken. A mere 3.6



MIKKEL ØSTERGAARD/PANOS PICTURES

per cent of cases have ever reached the courts while only three cases (less than one per cent) have ended in conviction.<sup>44</sup>

No wonder that so many women decide not to prosecute or even report rape or sexual violence. In the UK, for example, a Ministry of Justice report citing crime and criminal justice statistics found that 28 per cent of women who had been raped had not told anyone. One in seven had told the police, and 57 per cent had told someone about the incident, but not the police.<sup>45</sup> A study of 42,000 women in 28 countries in Europe found that 14 per cent of women reported their most serious incident of intimate partner violence to the police, and in the USA a study on female victims of violence found that 47 per cent, less than half, of rape or sexual assaults against women were reported.<sup>46,47</sup>

In fact, an apparently higher incidence of violence against women and girls due to higher levels of reporting may be a sign that the governance system is working rather than a sign that it is not. In the UK the *Guardian* newspaper reported that: "Domestic violence conviction rates are at their highest after a four-year campaign by prosecutors to tackle violence against women and girls... The overall number of prosecutions for violence against women – which includes rape, sexual assault and harassment – has risen to 91,000 cases a year."<sup>48</sup>

*Dalit women  
in New Delhi.*

The power of men at all levels can be hard to challenge – a collective effort is often needed. This collective effort may be women's groups coming together. For example, Pakistan's Aurat Foundation was one of a number of women's organisations lobbying the Sindh Provincial Assembly for legislation against domestic violence, in collaboration with jurists, lawyers, human rights activists and female legislators. Their argument was strengthened by good data on violence against women. It took five years, but in 2013 the Domestic Violence Bill was approved.<sup>49</sup>

As the box below shows, ensuring that legislation on gender equality is put into practice also needs support from allies in positions of power.

#### ENDING IMPUNITY FOR 'HONOUR' KILLINGS IN PAKISTAN<sup>50</sup>

When 17-year-old Khalida was murdered by family members after refusing a forced marriage to an elderly man, Razia Mudasser, a member of the Women Leaders' Group (WLG) of the Raising Her Voice project, used her working relationship with community leader Muniba Bibi and her influence with local duty bearers to encourage and support Khalida's mother to seek justice for her daughter.

Together the women reported the killing to police and commenced criminal proceedings against the family members responsible for Khalida's murder. Razia

and Muniba also ensured that the District Police Office conducted a post-mortem to confirm the true cause of death and gather vital evidence for the trial.

Despite strong opposition and harassment, the WLG maintained its pressure on the local *panchayat* (traditional court) until it agreed to end the inhumane tradition. To prevent the *panchayat* reneging on its commitment, the WLG secured a written statement, which would stand up in court. Since then, no incidence of 'honour' killing has taken place in Bahadur Khan.

"Our unswerving stance prevailed in breaking a longstanding tradition as the *panchayat* took the landmark decision to end 'honour' killing in Bahadur Khan village," said Razia Mudasser.

If men know they will be punished, they may be less likely to be violent towards their wife, partner or children. The World Bank study found that in Liberia and other countries, "some men said they no longer beat women because they were afraid of going to prison... Every day, there used to be an incidence of rape, but now there is less."<sup>51</sup>

"The use of fast-track courts has made it more alarming for men to be associated with rape," said one young man from Monrovia. This rural woman from South Africa said: "Men used to beat us and everything would just carry on as normal. But now we can report them to the police."<sup>52</sup>



Demonstration in Islamabad, 2014.

AURAT FOUNDATION



## 5 Women in charge – paving a path towards equality

*"The participation of women in governance has long been hindered by the assumption that their proper sphere is the 'private' sphere, and this same assumption has been an obstacle to good theoretical and practical work on the question of gender and governance."*

Martha Nussbaum, Essays on Gender and Governance<sup>53</sup>

*"Having more women in politics has a positive effect in terms of creating positive role models for young women and girls and boys. It paves a path towards equality."*

UN Women Executive Director  
Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka<sup>54</sup>

It is shocking that in the 21st century, after so many years of struggle for gender equality, women hold so few positions of power at any level in either the private or the public sector. The following figures give a brief sense of this:

- As of February 2014, there were 19 female global political leaders (including prime ministers).<sup>55</sup>
- Globally, women make up 21.4 per cent of parliamentarians.<sup>56</sup>
- Of the 500 largest corporations in the world, only 25 have a female chief executive officer.<sup>57</sup>
- Just 10 of the world's 195 capital cities are led by women, and they account for only 20 per cent of councillors worldwide.<sup>58</sup>

Women may face slander or even violence if they want to run for office. A key informant in Benin noted in the research for this report that: "If a woman leader is not married, people quickly conclude that it was the result of her leadership and refusal to submit to a man."<sup>59</sup> Men effectively excluded a woman in Benin who tried to run for election a second time through slander: 'Vote for her and she will take you out of your homes to make you prostitutes.'<sup>60</sup> The report also noted that: "In Sierra Leone and elsewhere, politics is regarded as a dirty game, something women should be protected against and not participate in – 'for their own good'."

Violence may be particularly severe if there are class or caste as well as gender



GEORGE OSODI/PANOS PICTURES

divisions. In India, for example, there is a reservation policy for Dalits, formerly known as 'untouchables'. But when Dalit women have contested elections, they have not only faced huge resistance but in many cases have been physically attacked.<sup>61</sup>

Sohela Nazneen, Professor of International Relations at the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh, noted: "Politics is patronage-based and is clientele-ist... and it's violent. So either you need muscle power, or you need money, or you need family connections. Which is why in South Asia you see so much dynastic politics... women who enter politics have other family members who are also engaged in politics."<sup>62</sup>

Often women are relegated to what is seen as 'soft' areas. For example, a study in Vietnam found that women decision-makers were under-represented on committees responsible for finance, defence and security; and over-represented on committees such as social affairs, education and youth.<sup>63</sup>

Everjoice Win, a Zimbabwean women's rights worker, noted that: "Getting more women at the decision-making table is [one strategy of choice]. Who sets the table and what these women will do when they get there is another matter. Unless these women and these lobbying activities are backed up by the power of numbers, by the power of women who speak for themselves and have strong movements, then change is never going to be sustainable, and in some cases, it won't even come! Worst case, it will be rejected by the very women it might claim to benefit; for example, from policy change or new legislation."<sup>64</sup>

Being elected is only the first step. Research for this report in India found that even if married women were elected locally (sometimes due to the quota law that 33 per cent of local government officials should be

Nigeria.

female), all decisions would be taken by her husband or another male household member:

*"If the female Sarpanch's [village head] father-in-law or brother-in-law is sitting there, she won't come in front. She will remain in her ghonghat [veil] and whisper in her child's ear what is to be said. Or they will not ask her... she will stay inside only,"* said a young woman from Lunkaransar.<sup>65</sup>

In other cases, women who have reached positions of power do not necessarily prioritise gender equality or support other women and girls, especially those from marginalised groups. Evelyn Flores, of the feminist organisation Puntos de Encuentro in Nicaragua, says: "The fact that there are more women in these positions doesn't mean that they are developing initiatives or policies to improve women's situations."<sup>66</sup>

But there has been progress, and there are many illustrations, such as the one below, of how having women in positions of power can make a difference to girls' and women's lives, especially, but not only, locally. Working in rural areas where more traditional patriarchal attitudes mean that it is more likely that women will face opposition from men if they want to stand – and may lack the confidence to apply – is particularly important. Local government reforms in Bangladesh tackled this issue by introducing direct elections to reserved seats for women.

#### **BANGLADESH: THE LOUD VOICE OF WOMEN COUNCILLORS<sup>67</sup>**

The 1997 reforms replaced the earlier system of nomination, and as a consequence, enabled women to be voted into office via a constituency and become political leaders. A research team surveyed over 600 women councillors in 13 districts at the Union Parishad (UP) level and followed up with focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with female and male UP councillors and chairpersons. The change allowed women a direct link with their constituency, helping to increase their legitimacy as representatives. Despite several obstacles, research by the Pathways South Asia team at the BRAC Development Institute of BRAC University found that reforms have partially contributed to giving women 'a foot in the door'.

Voting in  
Bangladesh.



G.M.B. AKASH/PANOS PICTURES

Women councillors reported a high rate of engagement with implementing development projects and involvement with local dispute resolution. About 78 per cent of women surveyed had participated in budget discussions and 52 per cent had suggested changes to proposals. This does not imply that women councillors now have an effective voice, but significantly, they are more secure in voicing their opinions through direct elections.

The fact that women councillors are now directly elected made them more assertive in claiming their rights and demanding greater responsibility in various public fora such as UP association meetings. As one female UP member pointedly said: "Oh, they in the *parishad* say, 'Why does a poor woman have such a loud voice? Who is she?' and I remind them, I was elected directly by people in three wards. I am there to represent their views. I have as much right to speak as they do."

Girls' and women's activism can be the lever that shifts social change and pushes for new laws, as we will see in more detail in Chapter 5. This is true for ensuring that increasing numbers of women can access positions of power. For example, in China's rural Shaanxi province, between 2003 and 2009, grassroots activism led to a three-fold increase in the number of women elected as village heads.<sup>68</sup>

It is also clear that education remains key to women's participation in politics: a report by Action Aid in Nigeria found that: "Education is the strongest factor influencing women's control of their own fate... in all the states, women are... handicapped because of lower educational achievements... And so they do not show interest in participating in local governance activities."<sup>69</sup>

Finally, one of the most hotly contested ways of ensuring that more women are elected is the quota system, whereby a percentage or a proportion of seats – in parliament or on boards – is reserved for women. Quotas are certainly effective in increasing the number of women in positions of power – 20 out of the 26 countries with the highest number of women in parliament have quota systems in place.<sup>70</sup>

Quotas were developed in acknowledgement of the historical power

imbalance and subsequent inequality between men and women. Some people argue that quotas prevent women competing equally with men and being elected on merit and that they detract from women's successes. Others view quotas as a temporary measure to ensure that more women are elected.

Sri Danti Anwar, Secretary of the Ministry for Women's Empowerment in Indonesia, recognises that quotas are a temporary measure, but she still thinks they are important: "We need quotas because women in politics all over the country are discriminated against. That is why we need affirmative action as a temporary special measure. You can remove this once you have more than 30 per cent of women in power. People say this is discrimination, but they don't understand. For centuries men have been seen as more valued... and have therefore held most positions of power. The numbers of women are increasing, but too slowly. In 2010, women in Indonesia held only 10 per cent of decision-making positions; by 2012 it was 16.4 per cent. But we want it to be more. Hopefully we will even reach 50 per cent."<sup>71</sup>

The danger is that quotas are seen as the solution to women's powerlessness. Quotas should not be a stand-alone solution; they are part of a wider package which includes consultation with, and support from, national women's organisations. It includes other measures that are appropriate to the cultural context and the political system of the country. Otherwise there is a danger that the focus on quotas could mean that once they are achieved, the pressure for gender equality is relaxed and interest in women's and girls' leadership decreases.

Evelyn Flores, from Nicaragua, is clear that increasing the number of women in power is only the beginning: "The fact that we've got good marks for having increased the number of women in management roles or the number of women ministers in the National Assembly, doesn't mean that these are improving our quality of life. That would involve distributing the household chores more fairly, having more men involved in bringing up their children, more men who use protection for sex..."<sup>72</sup>

This is a vision for the future that girls and young women – as well as boys and young men – should aspire to.



## 6 Conclusion: building a new world

*"They [the laws] have assisted us because we have worked hard and now don't lose everything. For example, when you leave the man's home, you divide the property and can go with something to begin your new life."*

Urban woman in Tanzania<sup>73</sup>

*"Stop letting males make rules that involve the female body."*

Young woman, Australia<sup>74</sup>

This chapter has shown how the spheres of relationships, agency and structures need to be connected in order for girls' rights to be realised. Each is reflected in another; the power balance in the family and community is reinforced in our public institutions because the attitudes that govern these have been learned in our homes, through the faith we profess and the media we are surrounded by.

There is no magic bullet when it comes to ensuring that the state institutions that control and should protect us are gender equal and accountable. There is no fool-proof mechanism that will distribute power more evenly. But having laws in place, more women in charge and training girls so that they know their legal rights, are all crucial. Above all, working with women's and girls' organisations, both locally and nationally, to demand that laws are actually implemented, is key to building the bridge between legislation and girls' daily lives.

Which is why a programme like the one below in Ghana, which actively involved young women in their own 'parliaments' and gave them a say in what they wanted to see changed, is so important.

### THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE: YOUNG FEMALE PARLIAMENTS IN GHANA<sup>75</sup>

In Ghana, women lack access to decision-making opportunities at all levels of society. Nationally, women hold 19 out of 230 parliamentary seats, or just eight per cent.<sup>76</sup> The Ghanaian Constitution has provisions to ensure gender equity and Ghana has ratified many of the

international agreements that call for an end to gender discrimination. Low education levels, early marriage and early pregnancy are just a few of the barriers holding women back from leadership positions.

In 2008 Action Aid Ghana (AAG), along with one of its partners, Northern Sector Action on Awareness Centre (NORSAAC), realised that young women aged 15 to 27 were not involved in their programmes. So they started young female parliaments, with two main goals: 1) to specifically target girls at a higher risk of dropping out of school and 2) to empower this particular group to increase their participation in local decision-making.<sup>77</sup>

The Young Female Parliaments currently operate in 15 districts in the northern region, assembling a total of 40 young women elected as representatives. They debate local politics, national issues and development projects, as well as issues that are of specific concern to them, such as gender-based violence and discrimination.

In 2012, the young female parliamentarians decided to challenge the general lack of female representation in the district assemblies. Through this action, the young women were able to convince the district assembly to reserve 40 per cent of allocated seats for women. Two members gained enough confidence to run for election.<sup>78</sup> Overall, the young female parliamentarians have improved young women's ability to take part in decision-making and voice their opinion with confidence. The young women who participate also serve as role models to girls and other young women who witness their courage and confidence.

As one electoral candidate reflected:

*"For me, the parliament has taught me two big things: that I have the right to participate in decision-making and that I can be whatever I want to be in the future. Though I was not successful in last year's elections, I will never give up and I'm working hard to come back."*<sup>79</sup>

## THE ROLE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS GROUPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TIMOR-LESTE CONSTITUTION<sup>80</sup>

Timor-Leste (East Timor) is an example of how women's groups and their use of international human rights instruments can play a vital role in shaping national constitutions to reflect the principles of gender equality.



*A member of the resistance movement with her son.*

formed women's equality office was to make sure that the post-independence government signed and ratified the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

In terms of political representation, following elections in 2000, 26 per cent of women were elected to the constituent assembly, the highest proportion in the Asia Pacific region. The Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE) was set up within the Office of the Prime Minister, and a women's rights activist was appointed as its head and as gender adviser to the prime minister. The Office was also responsible for implementing the UN Beijing Platform for Action. Each district in Timor-Leste had its own gender focal point helping to implement gender mainstreaming.

A review of the success of the OPE's first year found that awareness of domestic violence had been raised, and legislation for the constituent assembly was drafted. After the 2007 elections 38.5 per cent of members of parliament in Timor-Leste were women and, due to a regulation that a third of candidates on the party list had to be women, it is the only country in South-East Asia where women make up more than 30 per cent of lawmakers.<sup>81</sup> This has resulted in the passing of a number of gender-sensitive laws, including the Law on Domestic Violence. Unfortunately, this representation does not extend to the local level; there are hardly any women village heads, for example.

Despite progress at national level, tackling negative social norms and inequalities in everyday life remains an issue and there have been difficulties in terms of the implementation of laws and regulations that promote and protect girls' and women's rights. According to a report by the Asia Foundation, structural and cultural barriers remain: "Historical exclusion from educational opportunities, language barriers, family responsibilities, and a huge gap between the capital, Dili, and the rest of the country are only a few examples of the challenges that women have to overcome."<sup>82</sup> The report points to a continuing need to support targeted programmes that develop female leadership and to a commitment towards this end from the still male dominated political parties.

When Timor-Leste gained independence from Indonesia, women who had been part of the resistance movement were determined to play a role in government and ensure that gender equality was not forgotten in the new constitution. They had already formed the East Timorese Women's Network in 2000 which brought various women's networks under one umbrella and the first ever major women's conference drew up a national plan of action based on the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. Women's activists also drew up the women's charter of rights and lobbied for these principles to be included in the new constitution.

Pressure from East Timorese women's groups and their international supporters during the UN-controlled transition period, before full independence was re-established in 2002, ensured that the commitment to gender equality was not forgotten. They also refused to back down on their request for a Gender Affairs Bureau to be set up under the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Governance and Public Administration, and for a modest budget. The first task of the newly



*International Women's Day in London, 2009.*

JENNY MATTHEWS/PANOS PICTURES

So what would it look like if gender equality and girls' rights were placed at the heart of good global and local governance?

First, there would be increased awareness of the negative impact of discrimination. Second, there would be the potential for increased collective action to uphold the contract between citizen and state and make state institutions accountable for injustices – creating what is sometimes known as an 'enabling environment', which would mean more women and girls mobilising to improve the conditions of girls. There would be better access to justice and collaboration between government, civil society and the media to promote critical thinking around good governance so that girls and young women can become active citizens and help to hold local and global governance accountable.

These mechanisms for improving governance to promote gender equality need to be transparent, so that the state is answerable to all its citizens, including the least powerful. For this, there need to be sound monitoring mechanisms so that civil society – including women and girls – can participate in holding those in power accountable for change or lack of it. Governments are not just responsible for passing laws: they are also there to ensure that the laws are upheld and that systems for accountability are in place and are used.

How can public authorities be held to account for girls' and women's rights?

1. Ensure that all legislation supports gender equality.

2. Support and resource women's and girls' organisations to challenge impunity.
3. Ensure that there are proper resources and training for government institutions and staff to ensure correct implementation and enforcement.
4. Support mechanisms to improve accountability and responsiveness so that those in charge are held responsible for decisions they make and are answerable for failures to meet expectations and commitments.
5. Train women and girls (and ensure that they go to school) so that they have the skills and confidence they need to take up positions of power.
6. Use quotas to boost the number of women in decision-making positions internationally, nationally and locally, ensuring that this also takes account of diversity.
7. Monitor how laws are implemented to ensure that they, or their interpretation, are not biased against women and girls.
8. Collect sex disaggregated data.
9. Work with and train male leaders and male-led institutions to ensure they are more gender equal.

Following the money is always a clear indication of a society's and a government's priorities. Budgets driven by an awareness of gender equality would go a long way to making sure that girls' lives are improved in health, education and participation. And, as the examples below show, they would ensure that girls' rights are better protected in line with international law.



## GOOD PRACTICE: GENDER BUDGETING

One of the tools that women and their supporters have used to promote gender equality at institutional level is through participatory gender budgeting and tracking public expenditure to check that it is inclusive of women and girls.<sup>83</sup> This includes developing indicators to track the government's expenditure on gender equality measures.

- In the **Dominican Republic**, Progreso Hispaniola, with the support and coordination of UN Women, the Ministry of Women and the Foundation Demuca, has been working on a gender auditing programme aimed to mainstream gender in the formulation, management and evaluation of municipalities. It increased the political participation of women and set up seven women's departments in local government with budgets that included four per cent destined for education, health and gender.<sup>84</sup>
- In **Nepal** in 2007, the Ministry of Finance introduced gender-responsive budgeting. As a result, spending categorised as directly responsive to women went up from 11 per cent in 2007 to 17 per

cent in 2010. In 2008, a 10-per-cent tax exemption was introduced for land registered in a woman's name to drive implementation of laws on property and inheritance. The exemption, aimed at incentivising families to share their property with their daughters, sisters and wives, increased to 25 per cent in cities and 30 per cent in rural areas. The impact of these measures has been significant: in 2001 women owned 11 per cent of the land; this had increased to 35 per cent by 2009.

- In **South Africa**, a Women's Budget Initiative was implemented between 1996 and 1999. Among its successes was the introduction of the child support grant, given to the primary caregivers of young children from poor households. This reached poor, black and rural women better than previous measures. In addition, the South African Women's Budget Initiative successfully made the case for paraffin, a basic need for poor women, to be zero rated for value-added tax.<sup>85</sup> A new Gender Responsive Budget Initiative was launched in 2012.<sup>86</sup>



In many parts of the world, from school management committees to local councils, from parliaments to presidential elections, women and girls are challenging the ways that the world is being governed. This takes courage and determination. Progress may be extremely slow – and sometimes the movement is backwards rather than forwards. Women need to be able to win elections, to show girls that it is possible.<sup>87</sup>

As United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said: "With sound legal and justice systems, women can flourish and contribute to the advancement of society as a whole, including by helping to improve those very same systems for future generations – daughters and sons alike."<sup>88</sup>

Mina Das, from Nishtha, an organisation in India that works with girls, agrees. "We don't have a magic wand, we cannot change everything, but a little bit of change we can make. We are building a new world where women can enjoy their rights, where girls know that they're human beings and that they can do anything."<sup>89</sup>

# WHY LEGISLATION IS NOT ENOUGH

Researcher **Lorena Fuentes** examines femicide and gender-based violence in Guatemala.

**Femicide – the killing of women where signs of rape, torture and extreme cruelty are evident.<sup>1</sup> It is widespread in Central America and Mexico, and it is also found in other post-conflict societies such as South Africa. It is rare to see a case of femicide where the element of sexual violence is absent, and those most at risk come from backgrounds already deeply marginalised on account of their race or ethnicity and their poverty.**

This case study aims to highlight the problem of femicide and other forms of systemic violence that have a devastating impact on young women and girls in Guatemala. It lays out the emergent institutional and legal framework designed to protect women and girls' human rights and outlines some of the important advances that it entails in breaking the silence and impunity around gender-based violence. The limitations of this framework for transforming structurally embedded norms and inequalities are also discussed, along with some recommendations being advanced by girls' and women's rights groups for targeting the institutional and cultural networks that help support this violence.



## Introduction: The scale of the problem

While violence against young women and girls, as well as generalised violence, is hardly a new development in Guatemala, last year saw a rise in the indicators of violent killings of women and children, as well as acts of sexual violence and abuse: 755 women and 86 children and adolescents were killed as a result of violence – which respectively constitutes a 6.78 and 10.49 per cent increase on the figures from 2012.<sup>2,3</sup>

Additionally, between January and October there were reportedly 5,832 sexual crimes committed – of which 5,247 were perpetrated against women.<sup>4</sup> And, in a worrying start to the year, in January 2014, 61 women were killed, of whom 49 per cent were between the ages of 16 and 30.<sup>5</sup> Compounding these shocking statistics is the fact that in the overwhelming majority of these cases, the perpetrators literally get away with murder.

As a matter of both moral urgency and international law, the Government of Guatemala must demonstrate its political will to eradicate femicide and commit the necessary resources to ensure that young women and girls' right to a life free from violence, discrimination and poverty is not just an abstract entitlement, but a reality.

## Histories of violence haunting the present

We can only begin to develop an understanding of the problem of femicide and widespread forms of violence against women and girls by situating it against the backdrop of Guatemala's legacy of violence and internal armed conflict.

A United Nations Commission established at the end of the war in 1996 outlined the systemic nature of the sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls of mostly indigenous Mayan descent. The testimonials in their report highlighted how rape and other forms of gender-based violence were used as weapons of war by the State and military apparatus as part of a counter-insurgency strategy that amounted to genocide.<sup>6</sup> Of the estimated 50,000 victims of sexual violence, *not a single perpetrator has been brought to justice*. The impunity for sexual crimes committed during the war has contributed to the institutionalised acceptance and cultural normalisation of 'post war' violence against women and girls across public and private spheres of Guatemalan life.



*Women in Guatemala City demonstrate against violence.*

LORENA FUENTES

In several important ways, the war has not ended in Guatemala – particularly where women and girls are concerned. The signing of the Peace Accords did not remove the deeply embedded structures of racial, gender and class inequality, nor the institutional and cultural impunity for violence. In the absence of meaningful reforms that would address the distribution of wealth and strengthen the rule of law, Guatemalan society has become characterised by increases in organised crime, gang violence, and trafficking in drugs and humans – all of which bear enormous consequences for the human rights of girls and young women.

The cultural and institutional denigration of women and people of indigenous Mayan descent, coupled with the resistance to prosecuting crimes against minors, produces a particularly dangerous situation for upholding the human rights of those most in need of their protection in Guatemala. Young women and girls, especially those who are doubly and triply marginalised on account of their racial background and poverty, are at heightened risk of forms of social and gender violence. Femicide and sexual violence therefore constitute the extremes of a continuum of violence suffered by young women and girls in Guatemala that includes more subtle forms of discrimination such as a systemic lack of access to education, health and nutrition.

## **Breaking the silence: developing a legal and institutional framework**

On 9 April 2008 after sustained lobbying from women's and human rights groups in the country, a comprehensive Law Against Femicide (Decree 22-08) was passed by Congress – legally codifying femicide and other forms of violence against women and girls such as sexual, psychological and economic violence. The law defines femicide as an act committed by an individual who “in the context of unequal relations of power between men and women, kills a woman” and is punishable by 25 to 50 years in prison.

- Decree 22-08 added to a growing framework for the legal typification of women and girls' rights to be free from violence and discrimination that started with The Law to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Domestic Violence (Decree 97-96, 1996) and The Law for the Comprehensive Protection of Childhood and Adolescence (Decree 27, 2003).
- One of the strongest components of the Femicide Law is that it calls for the creation of specialised institutional bodies to provide integrated support to women and girls victimised by gender-based violence.
- The Law also spearheaded the creation of the first national courts in the world specialised to judge femicide and domestic violence cases. There are currently specialised courts in five districts of Guatemala, and in most cases the judges are female and have undertaken sensitivity training on gender violence.<sup>7</sup>
- Furthermore, with the support of the Public Ministry, specialised defence units for women and children have been created and comprehensive care centres have been set up for victims of gender violence – these include 24-hour access to teams of legal, medical, psychological, police and social support.

The 2008 Law entailed a crucial step forward in naming and outing the specific problem of femicide and other forms of violence against women and girls, as well as explicitly outlining the role of the State and its institutions in developing effective responses. These are all important achievements, but there is still a long way to go before femicide and violence against women and girls is eradicated.



## Justice out of reach: the limits of law to challenging structural violence

Despite the progressive nature of this legal framework, the gap between law and justice continues to be particularly wide where young women's and girls' rights are concerned. Since the Law was passed in 2008, femicide and sexual violence against young women and girls continues to increase, impunity for these acts remains nearly absolute, and many of the provisions of the Law have yet to be fully implemented.

- a. Despite the creation of the specialised femicide and domestic violence courts, they have only been effective in prosecuting and convicting perpetrators in 22 per cent of cases (and the rate is even lower in non-specialised courts). Women's and children's rights observers note that the real struggle lies in changing the perceptions of society and the people who are actually charged with operationalising the laws – such as judges and prosecutors. As one commentator emphasised, two weeks of training on gender violence will make little difference to the perceptions of a judge who has entrenched misogynistic views.<sup>8</sup>
- b. A further problem is how difficult it is for young women and girls actually to access the legal and justice mechanisms outlined in the law. There is insufficient knowledge about the existence of the Femicide Law in the first place, and in-country activists insist that information about women and girls' rights is sorely lacking in spaces such as schools and hospitals where it would be most useful. Guatemala is a country with 22 regional districts, and yet there are currently only five specialised courts.
- c. Even more problematic is that many young women and girls lack Spanish literacy.<sup>9</sup>
- d. Protection of victims of violence and witnesses is poor, which leaves women and girls as well as victims' families exposed to further violence. This lack of integrated support means that the incentive to pursue justice is extremely low.

Another limitation is that the Femicide Law is largely based on *responding* to violence that has already occurred through prosecution and punishment; and while this is an important step in a country rife with impunity, it leaves the element of prevention inadequately addressed. Targeting the values that perpetuate and normalise violence against women and girls in private and public domains requires that the State support initiatives that aim to prevent violence before it occurs or prevent re-victimisation.<sup>10</sup>

## WOMEN CHANGING THE WORLD: AN EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE<sup>11</sup>

One organisation that is offering a strong model of integrated holistic support to women and girls who are victims of violence is Women Changing the World. In addition to providing legal accompaniment and multi-disciplinary psychological and social support, they have developed a programme of mutual group support for girls and young women who have suffered from sexual abuse and other forms of violence. The organisation uses an innovative gender-justice model to help participants transform themselves from victims to survivors, to holders of human rights. By extending the model of support offered to girls beyond the legal stage of denouncing and prosecuting, this type of intervention works across the spectrum by trying to prevent further violence and promote self and group awareness of their rights.<sup>12</sup> Women Changing the World has developed alliances with other organisations working to protect young women's and girls' right to live free from violence; but the ongoing problem is a lack of adequate funding and State support, as well as resistance to these type of initiatives promoting women and girls' rights.



## Beyond the law: the role of education and media in promoting and protecting girls' rights and preventing violence and femicide<sup>13</sup>

Ideas that normalise and justify violence are not changed overnight. In addition to robust laws which punish perpetrators and protect victims, interventions in the spaces where ideas about women and girls are reproduced – such as schools and in media representations – are required if there are to be genuine paradigm shifts towards a society that has zero tolerance for violence against women and girls. In order to extend the focus to *preventing* femicides and other forms of violence, the State must demonstrate its political will by increasing resources and support to those organisations that are already working on the issue.



*'One Billion Rising for Justice' – Women demonstrate against violence.*

## Specific recommendations

- **Gender-sensitive and rights-based education:** the State must allocate sufficient funding to the Ministry of Education targeted specifically so that schools can develop rights-based campaigns and curricula that educate and address issues of gender inequality and violence. Particular focus should be given to ensuring that programmes designed to empower girls are sensitive to language barriers and reach outside regional districts. These programmes should be undertaken with the guidance of women and girls' rights groups and advocates in Guatemala and in the region.
- **Monitoring and regulation of media reporting:** views that promote victim-blaming in cases of violence and sexist attitudes towards young women and girls must be rejected through regulatory frameworks that take into account the socio-cultural context of unequal power relations as outlined in the Law Against Femicide. Attention should also be given to sensitising media depictions of violence and femicide, and steps should be taken to outlaw the publication of photos of corpses, which constitute a violation of the rights of victims and their families.<sup>14</sup>
- **Extending gender-violence training for operators of justice:** training of judges and public prosecutors should not be limited to specialised courts and teams dedicated to cases of gender-

based violence and femicide, but should be extended to all operators of justice.<sup>15</sup> Expanding gender-sensitisation programmes across the justice sector and within the national and municipal police service can help break down the norms and attitudes that normalise violence against women and girls; and help prevent cases of domestic and sexual violence from resulting in femicides by taking initial reports of violence seriously.

- **Supporting the work of women's and girls' rights groups:** the State must increase funding for organisations such as Women Changing the World that are working to protect women and girls' rights.<sup>16</sup> It should work in collaboration with these organisations to extend and promote examples of best practices in providing care and support to girls victimised by violence so that fewer cases of domestic and sexual violence result in femicides.

The State of Guatemala must treat femicide and violence against women and girls with the urgency it demands. In addition to fully implementing the existing provisions within the law against femicide, interventions at the level of education and the media, like those outlined above, can help to prevent violence against women and girls, to build a society where it is neither justified nor acceptable, and where perpetrators are brought to justice.





# More than words on paper? Girls and economic empowerment

# 4

## UN DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

### Article 23.1

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

### Article 23.2

Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

## 1 Introduction: girls' and women's economic empowerment – the right thing to do

*"Empowering women economically is not only the right thing to do, it also makes good economic sense... We know that increasing women's access to quality education, good jobs, land and other resources contributes to inclusive growth, sustainable development and long-term prosperity."*

Michelle Bachelet, former Executive Director UN Women and now President of Chile<sup>1</sup>

*"My primary problems are economic; our country has high unemployment and the situation is getting worse by the day, and if we get work it's going to be domestic work – and in this case they pay very little."*

Young woman, Nicaragua<sup>2</sup>

We live in an increasingly integrated and globalised world; one that is dominated by the market and driven by economic forces. We saw in Chapter 1 that globalisation has had both positive and negative effects on girls' lives – for example, access to technology and social media, increased educational opportunities, and improved national legislation in line with international standards on gender equality – but also rising unemployment and inequality, with limited economic opportunities for girls.

It is the rights of the least powerful and those least valued in society that are most likely to be infringed at times of rising inequality and cutbacks in state provision. Both affect vulnerable groups, including girls and young women, the most.

It is, therefore, particularly important in these times to ensure that girls' pathways to power are not obstructed. Keeping them open involves all three areas highlighted in this report – the social institutions and relationships within the family and community that we saw in Chapter 2; the legal and political institutions of the state covered in Chapter 3; and the economic institutions and the world of work which are the subject of this chapter.



PLAN

*Girls rolling beedis at home in India.*

Girls and young women have, in recent years, been the focus of international donors and corporations, both for their potential value to the economy and for their role as consumers. This emphasis on girls as an economic unit does not, however, put girls' real interests at the heart of social and economic policy. It also fails to address the issue of power within the notion of empowerment. Girls – particularly, but not only, those with disabilities, the very poor or those marginalised by ethnicity, caste, sexual orientation or even geography – remain vulnerable as workers and family members within a fluctuating global economy which does not support gender equality or girls' rights. This vulnerability has been increased by the impacts of recession on migration, jobs and welfare provision and compounded, as we saw in Chapter 3, by discriminatory structures and laws.

So what, in terms of the economic empowerment, does this mean for girls? One definition of 'economic empowerment' is "the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways which recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth."<sup>3</sup> According to another, this means that women (and, we would say, girls too) need to have access to "the power and agency to benefit from economic activities" so that they then have "the ability to make and act on decisions and control resources and profits."<sup>4</sup> Money, and the capacity to earn it, is a crucial element in the way power is wielded, and how power operates in the economy has everything to do with girls' pathways to empowerment.

It is widely accepted that education gives

girls the possibility to have more choices in their lives. But the marginal gains made in girls' secondary education are not translating to equal gains in employment or entrepreneurship opportunities for young women. As with other areas of women's and girls' lives, it is structural and social barriers, along with individual ones, that need to be addressed before the economic opportunities for women and men, girls and boys, can be truly equal.

Decent work and an income can provide young women with the ability to consider their own destinies rather than have their futures decided by dominant family members, as this mother from rural Ethiopia articulates very clearly: "My wish for my daughter is that she should marry after she has become self-reliant; I wish her to complete her education, then to have her own work and then to marry a person whom she loves and with whom she wants to live."<sup>5</sup>

However, large gaps remain between employment figures for young women and young men in many parts of the world.<sup>6</sup> And for many girls and young women, their work is domestic, unpaid and unacknowledged; a pattern that keeps them dependent on fathers, brothers and husbands regardless of the wider economy.

This chapter looks in more detail at the way in which power operates within the global economy and affects girls and young women; the choices they are able to make and the constraints they face. It examines the causes and the consequences of this lack of economic empowerment and rights and shows why the economic realities that girls face may not match up to the hopes inspired by their increased access to education. It looks at the reasons why the world of employment remains such an unequal one, examining attitudes to women working, the lack of appropriate skills training for girls, and the negative effects of the economic crisis.

It also looks at what needs to happen, in terms of changing attitudes, economic structures, laws and public and private institutions. It explores labour rights and younger women's involvement in trade unions. And it gives examples of what can and is being done, as Anis's story illustrates, to bring about change, so that economic empowerment for women and girls becomes more than just words on paper but paves their way to power.

## FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF INDONESIA'S FIRST FEMINIST

**Nikki van der Gaag** meets Anis, a businesswoman in the making who has taken part in a Youth Employment Programme run by Plan and its local partner, Magistra Utama. Anis's role model is an Indonesian heroine who campaigned for women's rights more than a century ago. But there are some things that Anis will do differently...



Anis is 19. She has an iron will and the determination to succeed. We sit in the shuttered technology shop in Rembang in Central Java where she works as a sales assistant. We are surrounded by computers, mobile phones and, in one corner, fluffy toys of all shapes and sizes. The other assistants sit behind their counters and listen.

Anis has just been awarded the 'assistant of the month' award, and says her next ambition is to become head of administration. She is still only in the first year of a two-year contract, but she is already one of the few who have been promoted – she now earns 2.2 million rupiahs (\$190) a month instead of an initial 500,000 (\$43).

She has come a long way from where she grew up. Her parents are farmers and she says: *"They couldn't afford for me to continue my education after junior high school. But I was determined to continue, so I worked in my uncle's house to earn money. Some I gave to my parents and some I saved. A year later, I explained to my parents that I wanted to continue, although my sister was already married. It was my uncle who registered me and I went back to school. It was a long journey; I had to get a lift in a truck carrying crops or vegetables to the bus stop and then travel for 30 minutes to get to the school. In the rainy season the bus ride alone could easily take one hour."*

*"I finished my studies and passed my exams. I*

*could have looked for work elsewhere, but I wanted to stay close to my grandparents who were getting older. So I took up a training with Plan in Youth Economic Empowerment and they helped me to find a job here."* She smiles. *"My parents are very proud of me."*

Anis says that although today girls, at least in theory, have the same rights to education as boys, when it comes to work, *"many adults still think that women should not be working because their main job is in the home"*.

She says her role model is Kartini, who was also from Java and is a national heroine. Born in 1879, she advocated strongly for girls' education, setting up the first girls' school in the area. She is revered countrywide on Kartini Day.

But Kartini's story did not end well. Although she was offered a scholarship abroad, she bowed to family pressure and became the fourth wife of a much older local dignitary. She died, aged only 25, giving birth to her first child. So Anis is adamant that this is where her comparison with Kartini must end. She dreams of running her own business one day – and says that neither family nor marriage will stop her. So how will she ensure any future husband does not forbid her from working? *"I will check before I get married,"* she says firmly. *"We will have a written agreement. If he won't allow me to work, I won't marry him. It's as simple as that."*





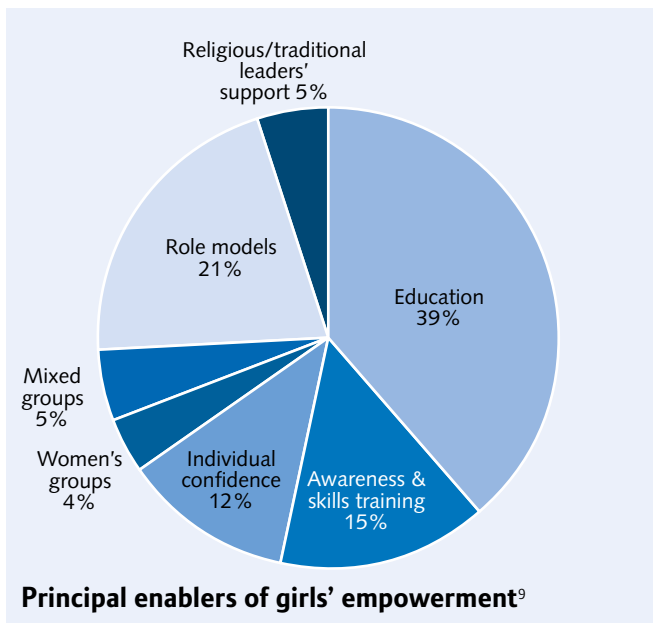
## 2 'Striving for the best' – does girls' education lead to employment?

*"Nowadays, there is no great chance of getting a good job despite the level of qualification. There is an absence of jobs in Rwanda and graduates are so many compared to the available opportunities."*  
Adolescent girl in higher education, Rwanda<sup>7</sup>

*"In the future, I want to be a very successful auto mechanic. I think I am a good role model. Sometimes people in high positions encourage and advise me and tell me I'm a good example. I make them happy as they just cannot believe that a lady can do such things!"*

Gloria Joyce, 18, trainee car mechanic at Plan International's Juba Technical High School, South Sudan<sup>8</sup>

It is clear that young women like Gloria Joyce are role models for other girls. There are many like her who are determined to get a good education against all odds. They are right to believe that education is important: first for its own sake, in terms of acquiring skills and expanding horizons; and second because going to school gives girls a greater likelihood of finding decent work that pays and that they enjoy. Having paid work and an income can liberate and empower girls as they grow into women, ensuring that as they move from dependence on their fathers they do not simply move on to being dependent on a husband, but are able to have more choice about their lives. Earning money and

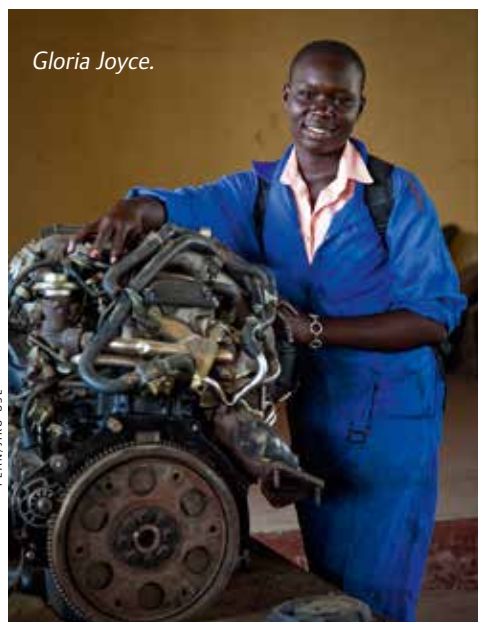


controlling assets and wealth is a huge part of power, and is a marker for the transition from childhood to adulthood. The danger for girls is that this key step never happens.

Research for this report in Togo found that of 306 respondents, 39 per cent cited education as the principal enabler of girls' employment aspirations, followed by 'positive role models' (21 per cent), 'awareness raising and skills training' (provided by NGOs – 15 per cent) and 'individual confidence' (12 per cent), community organisations, both women's and mixed (9 per cent), and traditional and religious leaders' support (five per cent).<sup>10</sup>

Parents too increasingly believe that education for daughters is vital for their future. Mothers in particular want their daughters to have the opportunities that they feel were denied them, as Mercedes from the Dominican Republic told herself as a young woman: "When I have my children, I am not going to have ignorant children; my children are going to study... I always used to think about that. I sent my daughter to school at three years old – the one who is now studying nursing."<sup>11</sup>

The 2013 Education for All Global Monitoring Report found, in Brazil, that while only 37 per cent of women with less than primary education were in work, this rose to 50 per cent if they had primary education and 60 per cent if they had secondary education.<sup>12</sup>



Gloria Joyce.



Having gone to school can narrow the pay gap between men and women. For example, in Pakistan, women with a primary education earn 51 per cent of men's earnings, but if they have secondary education this rises to 70 per cent.<sup>13</sup>

Globally, there are now more young women than young men going on to tertiary education. At college and university level, there are now 108 young women for every 100 young men.<sup>14</sup> But, as the young woman in the Rwanda research at the start of this section pointed out, none of this necessarily leads to a job, especially where gender bias is still very ingrained.<sup>15</sup> In Turkey, the unemployment rate among university-educated women is more than three times higher than that of university-educated men; in Iran and the United Arab Emirates, it is nearly three times and in Saudi Arabia, it is eight times higher.<sup>16</sup>

In recent years, the link between female education and employment has become more tenuous. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) shows, for example, that in Sri Lanka in the second quarter of 2012: "The highest unemployment rate is found among those with at least a higher secondary education: 5.5 per cent for men and 11.7 per cent for women.<sup>17</sup> By comparison, the unemployment rate for Sri Lankans who did not complete their lower secondary education is just 1.7 per cent for men and 3.3 per cent for women."

The United Nations points out that it is important to focus on girls' education, and alongside this, countries also need to focus on school-to-work transitions.<sup>18</sup> Another study says: "Too little formal attention has been paid to the issues of moving from education into employment, and what opens up or closes down opportunities for women and men, and where women's disadvantage lies..."<sup>19</sup>

Education is recognised as an important empowerment factor for girls in and of itself, but there remains a major gap between what being able to go to school leads them to aspire to do when they grow up and what is actually possible. A combination of factors, including structural barriers, discrimination, cultural attitudes about the role of women in society and about suitable jobs for women, caring responsibilities, and lack of access to contraception are responsible for the gap between girls' educational achievement and their labour market participation.

For this gap to close, policy makers need to consider these issues and address the question of economic empowerment and sustainable livelihoods for girls and young women as well as for boys and young men. A report by the World Bank points out: "Progress in education [for girls] is not matched by higher labour force participation [for women]. By age 24, women lag behind men in labour force participation in all regions. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the gap is around

26 percentage points.” In South Asia, it is 54 per cent – 82 per cent of men compared with 28 per cent of women.<sup>20</sup> In South Asia and elsewhere, one influencing factor may be the expectations around marriage at a young age that we saw in Chapter 2.

As in other areas of their lives, young women and girls continue to face both structural and attitudinal barriers to employment that no amount of education can counter. Fawziah al Bakr, Professor of Education at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, says that while girls are now getting an education, she is worried about their future: “It is much more difficult for a woman to get a job today than it was when I was young. There are many thousands of qualified teachers applying for every post. And there are few other jobs that women here can do.”<sup>21</sup>

### 3 Young men and young women active in the labour market

All over the world, young women are far less likely to be employed than their male counterparts.<sup>22</sup>

- For example, in 2011 in Jordan only 29,000 young women, compared with 224,000 young men, were employed.<sup>23</sup>
- In Liberia, 60 per cent of young men and 28 per cent of young women were employed in 2010.<sup>24</sup> In Afghanistan, these figures were 77 per cent and 21 per cent respectively.<sup>25</sup>
- In Europe, in 24 out of 27 countries, the employment rates of young women aged 15 to 29 are lower than those of young men.<sup>26</sup>
- In the US, the July 2013 labour force participation rate for 16 to 24-year-old men was 62.7 per cent, and the rate for young women was 58.2 per cent.<sup>27</sup>



Queuing for work in the Philippines.

ROBIN HAMMOND/PANOS PICTURES



MARCEL REDONDO/PANOS PICTURES

- The same data shows that 19.7 per cent of young women, compared to 12.3 per cent of young men, in Brazil are out of work.<sup>28</sup>
- In South Africa, these figures are 57.4 per cent for women compared to 47.5 per cent for men.<sup>29</sup>

- Women in general have the majority share of part-time work. Within the European Union, for example, women perform 74.8 per cent of all part-time work.<sup>30</sup>

The fact that fewer young women participate in the labour market than young men not only takes its toll on young women themselves in terms of their status, economic resources and restricted choices; it also has an impact on the economy. As Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, noted: “All economies have savings and productivity gains if women have access to the job market. It’s not just a moral, philosophical or equal-opportunity matter. It’s also an economic cause. It just makes economic sense. It’s a no-brainer.”<sup>31,32</sup>

A study by the World Bank in 2011 found that if girls and young women were in paid work at the same level as boys and young men, “annual GDP growth rates would be up to 4.4 per cent higher”.<sup>33</sup>

Projections for 2015 estimate global female youth unemployment to reach 13.1 per cent, a little higher than the estimated global male youth unemployment rate of 12.4 per cent. And the ILO estimates that over the next four years, this gap will widen.<sup>34</sup> As the *Economist* magazine noted: “Failure to employ the young not only lowers growth today. It also threatens it tomorrow.”<sup>35</sup>

Protesting against high unemployment in Spain.



## GIRLS' VIEWS OF EMPLOYMENT DISADVANTAGE IN AUSTRALIA<sup>36</sup>

In March 2014, Plan Australia conducted research online with 1,000 girls and young women, aged 14 to 25, about their perceptions of gender inequality, and what challenges they felt young girls in Australia faced. This study found that:

- Most girls believe they are at a disadvantage compared to men in achieving the career to which they aspire.
- Over a third of girls think it would be easier to get their dream job if they were male. This rises to over two-thirds who think it is harder for girls to achieve their dream job in business or in the police or armed services.
- Respect in the workplace and balancing family with work are seen as the biggest challenges facing girls growing up in Australia.
- 63 per cent say they would avoid certain jobs because of the sexism associated with them, whilst over half agree that females in Australia are expected to fulfil more traditional roles, such as looking after children, rather than focus on their career.

And yet economic empowerment is key as girls grow into women. Access to income, assets and decent work, particularly work that takes place out of the domestic sphere, can be liberating both practically and psychologically.

A girl or a woman earning money has more status at home and more choice – giving her the independence and confidence also to participate more fully in public life. Plan's research for this report in West Africa and Cameroon found that:

"Women's participation in income-generating activities and contribution to overall household wealth not only improves household food security and chances of survival, but also significantly contributes to a woman's status, garners her increased respect, improves her self-confidence and improves decision-making power."<sup>37</sup>

The 2009 'Because I am a Girl' report focused on economic employment, and noted that access to paid work has many positive benefits:

- It alters perceptions – the increased respect given to women by others within the household or community results in a greater sense of self-worth and self-respect.
- It increases the resources women have – such as income – at their disposal, and gives them a greater say in household decision-making.
- It allows women to make important and strategic life choices, such as postponing the age of marriage and investing in their children's health and education.
- It enables women to leave abusive husbands or renegotiate marriage terms.<sup>38</sup>

And it has given young women the means to map their pathways to power – though there is clearly still a long way to go.



*Running a small business in Uganda.*

## 4 Becoming a famous businesswoman? Young women and paid work

*"When I grow up I want to be a famous businesswoman so I can change my country."*

Heba, 18, Egypt<sup>39</sup>

Despite the aspirations of Heba, and many girls and young women like her, the world of formal paid employment, especially at senior levels, remains stubbornly male. Research from the business, psychology and sociology sectors offers a window into women's collective challenges, which include: pay inequity, inflexible workplace policies, and sexual harassment and discrimination.

- Globally, women still earn between 10 and 30 per cent less than men.<sup>40</sup>
- As highlighted in a 2014 study in the US, women who have caregiving responsibilities "may be perceived as more committed to caregiving than to their jobs and as less competent than other workers, regardless of how their caregiving responsibilities actually impact their work."<sup>41</sup>
- Women and girls are still primarily responsible for unpaid care in the home, leading to conflict between work and home. Even if a workplace has family-friendly policies, there is often a wide gap between formal policies and actual practices concerning work and family



MARK HENLEY/PANOS PICTURES

conflicts. Although most women in top managerial and professional positions have access to reduced or flexible schedules, few of these women feel able to take advantage of such options.<sup>42</sup>

- 46 per cent of women believe they have experienced sexual discrimination in the workplace, according to a US survey from 2013.<sup>43</sup>

For many women executives and senior managers, inhospitable organisational culture and harassment impedes career progress. In one study, one in four women indicated that they had experienced harassment or discrimination by colleague(s) or supervisor(s) while with their previous employer. This data showed a significant association between the prevalence of an inhospitable organisational culture for women and an encounter with harassment or discrimination.<sup>44</sup>

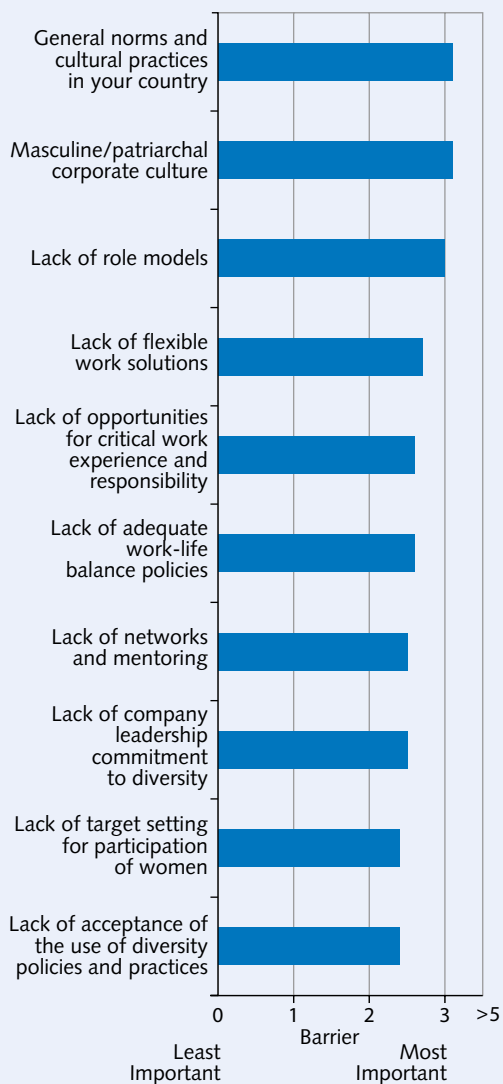
## 5 Women's representation in senior leadership

The reason why the school-to-work transition is particularly crucial for girls becomes clear when we look at the numbers of women in senior positions in the private sector. "Even in countries where women are well educated, excellently trained and prepared, have high aspirations and are motivated to get senior jobs, they are seriously under-represented," say gender specialists Tina Wallace and Helen Baños Smith.<sup>45</sup>

Recent data shows that within major corporations both the number and percentage of women reduce dramatically in the higher ranks of organisations.<sup>46</sup>

- Globally, women now fill 22 per cent of senior management roles. This is the same as 2013, 2009 and 2007, but the percentage fell during 2011 and 2012 when women were hit by the global economic crisis.<sup>47</sup>
- A 2013 survey of Fortune 500 Executive Officers and Top Earners in the US found that women held 14.6 per cent of Executive Officer positions, which was almost unchanged since the previous year (14.3 per cent).<sup>48</sup>
- In Africa, Egypt is at one end of the spectrum, with only 10 per cent of managers being women, while Botswana at the top end had 30 per cent.<sup>49</sup>

## Barriers to women's rise to positions of leadership<sup>50</sup>



The World Economic Forum's 2010 Corporate Gender Gap report asked companies what they saw as the most important barriers to women's rise to positions of leadership, on a scale of one to five, with five as the most problematic.<sup>51</sup> Norms and cultural practices and patriarchal culture were the most problematic, with lack of role models next.

## 6 The power of decent work

The International Labour Organisation defines 'decent work' as: "work that is productive and delivers a fair income,

security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men."<sup>52</sup>

All too often however, women's work is far from 'decent'. Research for this report in Rwanda points out that: "Questions need to be asked about the quality of women's employment: about the earnings, benefits and conditions that accompany it. With increasing 'informalisation' of the labour force over the past few decades, the growth of flexible labour markets and the outsourcing of production, women are increasingly engaged in unregulated work which is often casual or temporary, [where] women have little bargaining power, particularly with regard to negotiating better conditions of work, such as shorter hours. This kind of work is characterised by a lack of choices and may not be seen as empowering by the women doing the work."<sup>53</sup>



Market trader in Benin.





At the  
Rana Plaza  
complex near  
Dhaka.

And yet in many parts of the world, when young women go out to work, it is often in the informal economy or in part-time or contract jobs, frequently concentrated in the least protected parts of the economy – what is sometimes known as ‘vulnerable employment’. Research for this report in Rwanda also notes that: “Women in vulnerable employment are subject to a high level of economic insecurity and do not have the safety net of social protection to cover periods when they are out of work or sick... Being formally or informally employed, having a labour contract or not, working part-time or full-time, all these factors largely determine the level of security, protection and rights at work – and frequently the size of the pay packet.”<sup>54</sup>

For example, there are thousands of people – mostly young women – working in factories in deregulated export-processing zones and factories like Rana Plaza near Dhaka, Bangladesh, where more than 1,000 women lost their lives when a building collapsed in 2013.<sup>55</sup> Nazma Akter, a Bangladeshi labour leader, explains that accidents are common because there is no regulation in an industry that grew from women working in their own houses. In addition, working conditions in factories

like Rana Plaza are appalling: “There are long working hours. People are working 10, 12, or even 14 hours a day, sometimes more, six or seven days a week. We have problems of physical abuse, verbal abuse. When a woman becomes pregnant, she is fired. When workers raise their voices about an issue, they can be fired. Workers lack freedom of association in the workplace.”<sup>56</sup>



Improved  
working  
conditions  
for women  
factory  
workers.



*Agricultural worker in Togo.*

### **PUSH AND PULL: WHAT KIND OF EMPLOYMENT DO GIRLS ASPIRE TO?**<sup>57</sup>

What helps young women access the kind of paid work that can pave their pathways to empowerment? Research for this report in five communities in Togo noted that girls saw conflicting pressures, both push and pull factors when they thought about their future employment prospects.

**Pull** The pull is the weight of traditional norms and values that, coupled with religion, keep young girls from breaking out of the roles that society and culture have ascribed to them from time immemorial. This is most obviously felt in rural Togo where there are fewer forces for change – NGOs excepted – than in the larger towns and cities where time-honoured values, including the sanctity of the family and the rule of the patriarchs, are weakening. It is also true that in Togo's growing urban areas there are far more and diverse employment opportunities than in rural areas, where women are tied to farming but have no control over the means of production, which remain in the hands of men. With no access to credit, limited employment opportunities, few laws and policies favourable to women, and truncated education achievement, it is not hard to understand the sense of fatalism and passivity that pervades many of the responses we heard and recorded.

**Push** The push comes from a combination of the market economy and the increasing institutionalisation of democratic practice in Togo. The market economy, unlike the largely subsistence agricultural sector, has a dynamism that may lead to reforms in land tenure, increased access to credit and a growing demand for more specialised labour associated with new industries, including agriculture. These all favour young people, principally girls, who, with better education than their parents, including technical and vocational training opportunities, will be in a better position to compete for new jobs. Government also offers a growing number of employment opportunities, including the military, the police and civil service. This will multiply, particularly when the country decentralises many of its central state functions and devolves power to municipal governments.

Finally, with Togolese civil society growing and becoming more powerful, many organisations are women-owned and run and are 'rights-based'. Combined with an increasing, albeit still modest, number of women entering into politics and the formal economy, the forces pulling girls and women back to their traditional roles will grow weaker. The question is: will it be quick enough?

## 7 A global solution? Young women and the economic crisis

*"We need to ensure that the energy, skills, strength, values and wisdom of women become an integral part of the remodelled economic infrastructures now being developed by global leaders. Empowering and investing in girls and young women is part of a global solution for us all, now and in the future."*

Graça Machel, Mozambican advocate of women's and children's rights, and founding member of The Elders alongside her late husband, Nelson Mandela<sup>58</sup>

*"About 1,700 people used to work here and all are unemployed now. Many women were pregnant, many are ill and are left with nothing. It's been three months since the factory closed and we haven't been paid anything – no severance, no social fund payments."*

Ana Ruth Cerna, El Salvador<sup>59</sup>

Women and young people seem to be disproportionately affected by the economic crises, and many are still paying the price. A country's economic status impacts girls and boys differently from the moment they are born – one study in 59 developing countries of the effects of such crises found that if per capita GDP falls

by one per cent, average infant mortality in 1,000 births increases by 7.4 deaths for girls and 1.5 for boys.<sup>60</sup>

Shrinking economies also affect schooling, with different implications for girls and boys. Research has shown that when economies grow, five per cent more girls and three per cent more boys go to school, while a shrinking economy means that 29 per cent fewer girls and 22 per cent fewer boys finish primary school.<sup>61</sup> A study in Brazil found that children were sent out to work when parents were unemployed due to a financial crisis – and that this could affect up to half of 16-year-old girls.<sup>62</sup>

In terms of paid work, a crisis affects women and men differently. "Women's lower employment rates, weaker control over property and resources, concentration in informal and vulnerable forms of employment with lower earnings, and less social protection, all place women in a weaker position than men to weather crises," says a report from the International Labour Organisation.<sup>63,64</sup>

But it is young people who are perhaps the hardest hit. While they are not disaggregated, the latest statistics from the International Labour Organisation found that in 2013, global youth unemployment was 73.4 million – 3.5 million higher than in 2007.<sup>65</sup> Many countries in the West have seen the highest rates of growth in unemployment; up to 24.9 per cent between 2008 and 2012. In countries like Spain and Greece, more than 50 per cent of young people are unemployed.<sup>66</sup>

Research for this report in Rwanda found that although the situation for young men is bad enough, "it is often worse for young women, who tend to have lower levels of education and often experience discrimination when trying to enter the typically male-dominated labour force. Only 38 per cent of technical and vocational training students are female. Unemployment has not only resulted in economic insecurity but has also led to increases in urbanisation, marginalisation and poor self-esteem of youth."<sup>67</sup>

Once again, the most marginalised are worst affected – there are also large gaps within populations of young women that relate to ethnicity, class and disability, as the example of Australia shows clearly.

Protesting outside parliament in Greece.



GEORGIOS MAKKAS/PANOS PICTURES



## AUSTRALIA – POOR YOUNG WOMEN BEING ‘LEFT BEHIND IN LIFE’<sup>68</sup>

The Council of Australian Governments (Coag) Reform Council report, which studied outcomes for women and girls in the past five years to 2013, found that the challenges faced by disadvantaged young women are particularly significant – 46 per cent of disadvantaged women between 18 and 24 years of age aren’t in work or in higher education. This is in stark contrast to the wealthiest group of young Australian women, in which just 17 per cent aren’t involved in work or study.

While the gap in education and employment between wealthy young men and their poorer counterparts is 19 per cent, the discrepancy between these socio-economic groups among women is 28.5 per cent. The gap in Year 12 attainment between rich and poor young women is 19.3 per cent. When it comes to Year 3 reading skills, the gap between the two groups is an enormous 91.8 per cent.

Dr Lisa O’Brien, chief executive of anti-poverty group The Smith Family, told *Guardian Australia* that the inequality among young women would have “huge implications” for Australia’s future. “There are large groups of young Australian women who are being left behind in life,” she said.

While the most recent economic crisis was mainly in the North, there have also been impacts in some countries of the South, where, as Ruth Pearson and Caroline Sweetman note: “Pre-existing gender inequalities have worsened women’s situation in the labour market during the crisis.”<sup>69</sup>

For example, in Zambia, notes one report: “the government’s limited and delayed response to the crisis, financial constraints, and an inadequate social protection system have interacted with deepening poverty and entrenched gendered attitudes to produce some very negative effects on girls and young women... Major reductions in government revenues and donor funding have led to dramatic cuts (of more than 25 per cent) in the public-health sector, and as the responsibility for providing care has shifted from the public to the domestic sphere, girls from poor households have had



to take on more of the burden of caring for other family members.”<sup>70</sup> Once more we see how this links back to the fact that girls’ time is less valued than that of boys and men and that therefore governments feel they can depend on their unpaid labour to fill the gap that cuts in social security and welfare inevitably create.

This extra burden of care that girls and women already bear is often exacerbated during times of crises. In Zambia, for example, between 1990 and 2009, the ratio of girls to boys in secondary education, instead of improving, actually declined from 0.92 to 0.88. In other countries, parents married their daughters young to older rich men.<sup>71</sup> Others resorted to selling sex in order to survive or to help their families. In Kenya, schoolgirls as young as 12 were reported to have had sex in exchange for food, resulting in an increase in the number of pregnancies among young female students.<sup>72</sup> Research for this report in Kenya found that the economic crisis led to young women selling the only thing left to sell: their bodies: “Studies have also shown that with loss and decline in employment opportunities in general the physical body is becoming the site of ‘work’ for women and young girls. The loss of survival and livelihood in the rural areas has also led to migration to the cities, cross-border transfer of women resulting in increasing vulnerability to risky sexual life and contraction of HIV/AIDS. Prostitution, labour migration and illegal trafficking of women and children for the sex industry form the ‘shadow economy’ of globalisation, an indicator of ‘feminisation of survival’.”<sup>73</sup>

*An out-of-school mother in Zambia.*

### 'What can we do? Work harder, eat less...'

*"The economic situation here is very bad; things here always going up, everything is more expensive. The only thing we can do is work to support ourselves."*

Chantal's family, Dominican Republic

Plan's research in 2014 with the 142 cohort girls and their families, whom we have been following in nine countries since 2007, reveals just how much the global economic crisis has affected their lives. As the cost of living has increased in each of the countries in our study, families have had to adapt, and women and girls in particular bear the burden. The main theme of many of the families' daily lives is one of struggling to survive – economics in these instances is about necessity and not rights. Women and girls particularly find themselves spending more time collecting water or doing subsistence farming. This restricts women's and girls' time and their mobility.

Families in all nine countries reported that the price of food and essential commodities such as oil has increased over the past three years. In 2013, food prices doubled in Togo. In Brazil, Bianca's mother reported going shopping and prices increasing by the time she returned just two days later. Raisa's mother from the Dominican Republic said: "The food prices have gone up too much; things are difficult, now we have to buy and use less."

Out of 116 families, 47 reported that their income had decreased since the previous year. Most families across the countries reported irregular and under-employment.

Increasing numbers of families receive government social protection: nine in the Dominican Republic, eight in the Philippines, four in Brazil, five in El Salvador, one in Vietnam.

A quarter of the girls' mothers are not involved in paid work outside of the home (they are doing unpaid domestic and care work in the home). More than twice as many fathers than mothers have a skilled trade. Most of the men and women who are working, do so in the informal economy.

A reduction in resources such as income, land and crops means that other resources, such as time and social networks, become the dominant capital. All these factors have a negative impact on gender

equality and gender roles. Women and girls have increased responsibilities and tasks, and feel the pressure to do more, eat less and have less in order to be able to provide for their children.

There are also indications of the stresses that economic fragility places on the family and how economic insecurities affect the families' health and wellbeing. Seven-year-old Thearika in Cambodia is already helping her mother find more time by looking after her little brother: "Thearika wakes up at 6am, cleans her teeth, takes her bath by herself, and then helps to take care of her baby brother. She has breakfast at home before she walks to school, [which takes] around 10 minutes. In the afternoon she also looks after her brother, when he is sleeping for

around three hours. Her mother would like her to go to university [one day] if they can afford it. At present she is worried about increases in the cost of living, and medicines for Thearika when she got flu earlier this year."

The data also illustrates how choice has to be restricted, as Darna's grandmother from the Philippines explains: "Yesterday I bought a kilo of sugar, and it was P49 (\$1.09), last year it was around P30 (\$0.67). Nowadays the children keep on asking for money for their allowance to school. I tell them to slow down. I don't have money to buy milk for the children. There is lots of food I would

like to buy, but that you can't buy even if you strive, because the budget is really constrained."

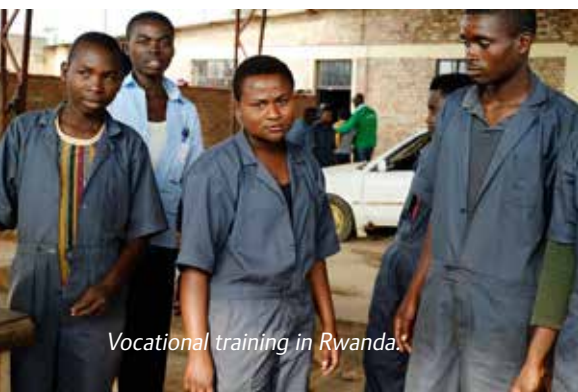
The shock of crises, which is borne largely at individual and household level, rather than being absorbed by the market or the state, has led to a heavier reliance by families on social networks. A small but growing number of girls – eight in 2012 had risen to 17 by 2014 – are in the care of their grandmothers or grandparents, usually because the girls' mothers have migrated for work. Increasing numbers of families are reporting relying on remittances: money sent home from family members working in larger towns and cities and from those working abroad. In 2012, only five families reported this; in 2013, the number had risen to 11 and 2014 saw a further increase, to 13 families.

Madelin's family, from the Dominican Republic, says: "There is not much work here and we have another child, and the costs are higher. We are all suffering. We keep on working, because what else can we do?"



Preparing food in Uganda

PLAN



Vocational training in Rwanda.

PLAN/JENNY MATTHEWS

## 8 'When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job' – attitudes to women's employment

This section looks at one of the factors that stop women achieving equality with men at work: attitudes towards women's employment. These attitudes, especially on the part of those in powerful positions, influence the value that is placed on women's employment compared to men's, and thus have an impact on a wide range of factors, including pay discrimination, attitudes towards women in senior management, parental leave and sexual harassment.

A poll by the US-based Pew Research Centre found that when asked to agree or disagree with the statement: "Women should be able to work outside the home," the overwhelming majority of countries had more than 90-per-cent agreement.<sup>75</sup>

However, when asked to agree or disagree with the statement: "When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job", a number of countries had a much higher figure who agreed – 84 per cent of respondents in India and 82 per cent in Pakistan agreed, 75 per cent in Egypt and 68 per cent in Jordan; compared with 51 per cent in Lebanon, 49 per cent in Russia, 41 per cent in Brazil, 14 per cent in the US, and 12 per cent in the UK.

The fact that even in Western countries there is a minority who agree should ring alarm bells for policy makers. The battle over women's paid work outside the home is clearly not yet won. Yet again these attitudes influence economic structures and practices. They both affect girls' ambitions and desire for a career and restrict their access to the formal workplace where these

same views towards women and girls' roles are entrenched; held often by senior people, mostly men, in power.

Men's views are often more entrenched than women's. In some countries, the research found that: "male respondents are considerably more likely than female respondents to agree that men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce". In Egypt, nine out of 10 men and six out of 10 women share this view.<sup>76</sup> In some countries, there was a gender gap of more than 10 points between the responses of women and those of men.

Plan's own research with adolescents in India, Rwanda and the UK for the 2011 'Because I am a Girl' report found that if presented with the statement: "When women work they are taking jobs away from men", three per cent of participants in the UK agreed, but this rose to 31 cent in India and 69 per cent in Rwanda. The difference between boys and girls was insignificant.<sup>77</sup>

In a survey by Afrobarometer in March 2014, four out of 10 respondents said that women are 'often' or 'always' treated unfairly by employers, while half said this occurs 'never' or only 'rarely'. Moroccans were most likely to report inequality in the workplace (62 per cent), followed by Sierra Leone (57 per cent), Sudan (55 per cent), Tunisia (53 per cent) and Swaziland (52 per cent).<sup>78</sup> In Morocco, another report found that more than a third of young women said they did not work primarily because their husbands or parents would not allow them to, and another third said they were constrained by social norms or domestic responsibilities.<sup>79</sup>

### Gender gap on views of women working outside the home<sup>80</sup>

Percentage who completely agree that women should be able to work outside the home

	Total	Men	Women	Gap
		%	%	%
Pakistan	47	31	65	+34
Egypt	23	11	36	+25
Jordan	22	10	34	+24
Kenya	66	58	73	+15
S. Korea	65	58	73	+15
Spain	60	53	66	+13
Lebanon	71	65	76	+11
Indonesia	21	16	26	+10



## 9 Conclusion: growing future talent

*"Don't give up easily, strive and fight for your rights as workers. Know the Labour Relations Act, eat and sleep the Act. Know your constitution and focus on your dreams and goals regardless of the environment you are living in."*

PhumlaXaba, young woman in the South African 'Decisions for Life' Trade Campaign<sup>81</sup>

*"While governments have an important role to play in creating the right policy framework for improving women's access and opportunities, it is also the imperative of companies to create workplaces where the best talent can flourish. Civil society, educators and media also have an important role to play in both empowering women and engaging men in the process."*

Global Gender Gap 2013<sup>82</sup>

This chapter has noted that girls' education is a vital part of girls' economic empowerment. We have argued that although individuals need to change – and training programmes can help with male attitudes and female confidence – many of the solutions are structural, reinforced by social relationships and attitudes. Once again girls' and young women's pathways through life are shaped by power relations in the wider world.

Even in countries where there is economic growth rather than recession, social economist Naila Kabeer notes that: "the outcomes of growth appear to be far more positive where it is accompanied by an expansion in women's employment and education. This suggests that the processes of growth may have to be accompanied by public action to remove gender-related barriers to education and employment."<sup>83</sup>

For the millions of women in the informal workplace, Zoe Horn points out: "Governments in developing countries must act now to prioritise expenditures in order to support pro-poor, gender-sensitive policies that will, at their core, promote the livelihoods of the majority of their workforce." She gives the example of the 2005 National Employment Guarantee Act in India, which guarantees employment to adult members of every rural household in



India for at least 100 days in every financial year. And she notes that cash transfer programmes and microfinance can also be of benefit to poor girls and their families.<sup>84</sup>

For the formal workplace, these measures also include: increasing parental leave and flexible work arrangements for both women and men; expanding quality and affordable childcare services in order to free women's time for paid work and ensure that daughters are not kept out of school; and increasing fathering roles and men's participation in domestic responsibilities through both policy and campaigns.

The private sector too needs to play its part. Companies may institute policies on gender equality, introduce gender as part of Corporate Social Responsibility, and run campaigns and financial incentives to increase the number of women in leadership positions. For example, MAS Holdings, a textile supplier in Sri Lanka, realised that its women workers were leaving as they married or had children, creating a skills shortage. The company polled its workers to see what would help them stay at work. Nursery facilities, IT and English language education, and career development training have all led to lower staff turnover and a bigger pool of future managers. Despite competition from other suppliers with cheaper costs, a commitment to women's rights and empowerment has won MAS contracts with companies such as Victoria's Secret, Gap, Nike, Adidas and Marks & Spencer.<sup>85</sup>

Educating young women about their

*Savings group meeting in Uganda.*

rights, supporting them through role models and mentors (as we will see in Chapter 5) and ensuring that they are part of a union or have a collective voice can make a big difference to their future prospects.

Trade unions too need to be aware of young women's needs as distinct from young men's. As Silvana Cappuccio, from the International Textile, Garment & Leather Workers' Federation argued: "The need for young women to organise is stronger than ever. Organising young women workers is fundamental to achieving decent work for all. Trade unions – which have played a key role in promoting gender equality – increasingly recognise the fundamental importance of reaching out to young women, most of whose income opportunities

lie in the unregulated informal economy."<sup>86</sup>

As Dina, 17, from Indonesia, says: *"When girls want to be leaders there are so many barriers for them – people think leaders are men, and women are only there to look after their children."*<sup>87</sup> Girls cannot achieve gender equality in the workplace without a change in the way they are viewed and valued by their families. They also need government support to address market and institutional failures – such as robust laws on equal pay and parental leave, measures to address discrimination, sexism and abuse, and corresponding changes in the private sector. Without these, women's rights and equality in the workplace will not be achieved and girls will continue to face obstacles on their pathways to power.

## LIFTING THEIR HEADS HIGH: THULILE MOTSAMAI AND THE 'DECISIONS FOR LIFE' TRADE UNION CAMPAIGN IN SOUTH AFRICA

Decisions for Life is a campaign run by the International Trades Union Congress in 14 countries.<sup>88</sup>

**Thulile Motsamai**, trade union representative at the Birchwood Executive hotel in Johannesburg, explains how the campaign is helping young South African women gain awareness of their rights and develop within the South Africa Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union, SACCAWU.

### *What is the Decisions for Life campaign?*

It is a campaign aimed at young women; it informs them not only about their rights in the workplace but also in their homes, at school, etc. It is not only aimed at working women, but young mothers, for example, some of whom leave school at a very early age. We take our campaign to supermarkets, cybercafés, to the streets, children's homes, shelters for women who have suffered domestic violence, etc. We make sure there is a bit of fun at these events, otherwise young people would soon lose interest if faced with nothing but long speeches.

Approaching people is not difficult: we are young people talking to young people, we speak about our own situation... We are trying to reach as many young people as possible, because if your CV shows that you have no work experience, employers see you as easy prey, as a person they can underpay and exploit to the hilt. When you are aware of your rights, it is different.

### *Do you also take the campaign into schools?*

Yes, the campaign is also aimed at students, as they have to take important decisions about their future

as soon as they complete their studies. We try, for example, to raise their awareness about sexual harassment, to help them gain self-confidence and teach them to say 'no' by making them realise that this harassment can lead to many serious problems, such as HIV, desolation and even suicide. They have to take care of themselves before they enter the labour market, so that when they do they are strong women who know their rights and know what can and cannot happen.



### *How do you see your future in the trade union movement?*

I want to change something in the lives of young people, something to ensure that their views are heard and acted on. I would like to reach out to as many young people as possible. There are so many young women suffering, who are tired of their lives, young mothers faced with huge problems when the fathers take off. I would like to bring a ray of hope into their lives, show them that there is a life in spite of all these problems, but it depends on them: they can choose to continue down the same path or to lift their heads up high again and do something with their lives. It is the only way to build a better world.<sup>89</sup>

## REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES: RESEARCH WITH YOUNG PEOPLE IN BRAZIL, UGANDA AND VIETNAM

### Exploring the Gap: New Ideas and Old Realities<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction: research methodology

This research was conducted in and around communities taking part in Plan's long-running cohort study – 'Real Choices, Real Lives', which, since 2007, has been following 142 girls from nine countries around the world.<sup>2</sup>

This small study with 40 adolescents (aged 12 to 17) and 69 young women and men (aged 18 to 20) in Brazil, Uganda and Vietnam explores their ideas, beliefs and ambitions. It helps us to understand the changes at work over the generations within families and communities; adding both to our understanding of the pressures and choices facing the families of the younger girls whose lives we are following, and to our knowledge of the issues discussed in this year's report. It was conducted through in-depth individual questionnaires and single-sex focus groups.

The research reflects on the ways in which individual lives are shaped not only by individuals themselves, but also by the people they talk to, the groups to which they belong, the spaces – home, school, work, community – they move through and the social structures and institutions – such as the law – which they encounter. For this reason, we present some of the data below in discussion form, to show not only what and how young people think, but also how they react to each other.

### 1. Rights and realities

The adolescents and young women and men across the three countries talked about the changes that have occurred even in their own lifetimes; for example, in relation to equal rights to education. But when they started to talk about the realities of poverty and gender in relation to these rights, a very different picture emerged – one that is deeply embedded in inequalities of power and social status.

*"Many parents think that later on, girls will earn money for their husband's family so it's not necessary to invest in her study."*

Hu, rural Vietnamese girl

*"Nowadays, many families are ready to invest in their daughters to study and study further."*

*"No, I object [to] this idea. Many parents believe that when a girl reaches 18 and finishes high school, she only needs to get married and that is enough. Like a family near my house, they have one son and two daughters. The boy is still little. One girl dropped out of college when she was finishing the first year. The second one dropped out of school, too. Many families around my house think that it is enough for girls to be married; much studying is not needed. This fact is even true with my family. My father said that if I were a girl, I would not be fed to study until now. My mother keeps saying that because I am a boy, my parents are trying to work and support*

*me in order for me to develop my career, buy a house. If I were a girl, I am sure that I would not be studying any more."*

Conversation between Bach and Anh, urban Vietnamese boys

One of the most visible forms of inequality of power and status came through in the ways in which young men and women talked about differences in investment in their futures. Their use of language highlighted the fact that while education is regularly described in one particular way in public – as a right – it may be described within private family negotiations in quite another, with language based on affordability and return on investment related to the complex financial decisions families have to take. So, while young men and women felt that there were opportunities, both in terms of education and in terms of work, they also felt they were not always able to take advantage of these, and that the needs of sons were often prioritised over the needs of daughters.

While girls themselves may have high ambitions, these are often mediated and regulated by what their parents see as appropriate.

*"I wanted to study Tourism Management to travel everywhere, but my mother objected. She said that girls only need a stable life and did not want me to travel a lot or strive hard to make a living. So she forced me to study accounting."*

Quy, urban Vietnamese girl





Young women from Brazil.

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Being able to use the language of equality, and have an understanding of rights, is clearly not enough to make gender equality a reality. Urban Brazilian boys said, “everyone is equal”, “you just have to work hard” and “the opportunities are the same”. But within the same conversation, they said, “girls have a lot of domestic chores to do” and “boys want to have a lot of fun”. Girls in Brazil also picked out ‘prejudice’ as one of their main concerns, in relation to both access to employment and gender-based violence.

In individual closed interviews, young women were likely to describe qualities such as showing respect, having discipline, being patient, humble, kind and working hard as the keys to success. They emphasised internal and personal factors, which were dependent on their behaviour, sacrifice and dedication, and on looking inward rather than out. Boys, on the other hand, tended to look outwards for enabling factors, to the community, government and leaders as key allies in supporting their future aspirations. For boys, “getting a wife” and “having a good wife” was viewed as success, whereas none of the girls mentioned marriage as an enabling factor for success – one girl reflected that it is important “not to rush for marriage”.

This prejudice also means that girls are not able to have their voices heard in public, as this boy explained:

*“Some girls are restricted from attending community meetings like this one, yet they have good ideas – better than ours – and in the end we lose because they are not allowed to move. A girl can come and give advice on how to start a business and development things but because she is not allowed we lose these ideas and follow old-fashioned ideas that we think are the best as boys.”*

Paul, rural Ugandan boy

We found that the way girls are taught to see themselves limited the way that they are able to imagine their lives. Sometimes young men and women encourage each other, forming networks and building solidarity, but they also regulate each other’s behaviour, or characterise each other in stereotyped ways.

*“Many girls are lazy or are not doing well at school so they want to quit and get married. Girls get bored easily. After being scorned by their parents that ‘if you study like that, you had better stay at home and get married’ or ‘Getting you to school is a waste of money’, girls will quit school to stay home or get married.”*

Conversation between urban Vietnamese girls

## 2. Violence

Nothing demonstrates the disconnect between the law which tries to protect girls' rights and the reality of their lives more clearly than violence. In all three countries, it was one of the key ways in which both young men and women felt that access to public spaces was limited. In discussions with urban girls in Brazil, for example, none of the girls felt confident that her right to live without violence would be protected, and none felt that the law was effective in prosecuting perpetrators of violence. Young women and men also recognised that violence, and sexual violence in particular, brought social stigma, shame and a loss of confidence, with a range of negative effects.

*"Some girls might be victims of sexual abuse. Being ashamed, they don't dare to go to school. Most of them will quit studying. There was a sexual abuse case which was then prosecuted in my commune. However, the offender fled."*

Nhon, rural Vietnamese boy

*"You lose confidence and respect; for example, there was a girl who was raped and she no longer goes to that village because everyone used to laugh at her."*

Phoebe, urban Ugandan girl

One of the most worrying ways in which girls can absorb discrimination and inequalities is through an acceptance of the violence they experience and see around them.

Phoebe: *"If a man warns you various times and you continue, he can beat you and you can't report to anyone because you the wife will be in the wrong."*

Other girls in unison: *"Even though they beat you severely?"*

Phoebe: *"No, if they are simple injuries."*

Conversation between urban Ugandan girls

These kinds of views, where 'simple injuries' are nothing to complain about, are expressed despite apparently robust legislative frameworks, such as the Domestic Violence Act of 2010 in Uganda, which makes a wide range of abuses illegal and can be applied to ex-partners, married or unmarried cohabiters, and domestic employees.<sup>3</sup> The acceptance of violence is made worse when girls, because of both their age and sex, are rarely part of any participatory public decision-making processes, and are not encouraged to speak out. This makes it all the more difficult for them to break out of the expectations for 'appropriate ways to behave': as obedient, submissive, and good.

## 3. Legislating for action

While laws were valued by young women and men in all three countries, it is also very clear from the way that they discussed them that laws were not enough, and that norms around marriage, or the reality of poverty, can mean they are ineffective.

*"Some people do not like these changes but government has the mandate to enact laws and people will respond. People will sometimes hesitate but due to the laws available the person will act."*

Zuar, rural Ugandan boy

There were calls throughout the research for laws to be stricter, and properly enforced.

*"There must be strict laws for the parents and how they bring up their children. For example, some parents bring up children putting more focus on boys when it comes to education and girls are proposed for marriage – eeh! Therefore, laws must be clear that parents must educate all children, boys and girls, and a parent who does not has to face the law."*

Gilbert, rural Ugandan boy

However it was also clear to the participants, particularly with regard to gender-based violence, that legislation alone was not enough.

Antonia: *"When a woman suffers violence, she gets traumatised and she's afraid it will happen again."*

Mayara: *"But denouncing doesn't help, because many times the police do nothing, and then the husband might become even more violent and even kill his wife later."*

Antonia: *"Women need to denounce violence to the police, even though it doesn't help because the laws don't work we need more control to make them work for real."*

Urban Codo girls in conversation, Brazil

One of the key ways in which young women and men felt that legislation could be improved was through community ownership of laws. There was a recognition that gender-based discrimination is something that requires engagement and discussion, so that young women and men, as well as their employers and families, are more aware of their rights.

Zuar: *"In the first place I think there must be trainings about gender equality to avoid discrimination in society, at least every month, to*

Young men from Vietnam.



educate people that a girl child is equally important as a boy at home; that what a boy does even a girl can do and vice versa."

Hillary: "To me, I think government needs to play the role of sensitising people that they have a right and equal opportunities to access jobs, provided they have the academic requirements of the job, without discrimination based on sex. All workers must be treated equally without discriminating or handling girls with more care."

Conversation between rural Ugandan young men

#### 4. Access to resources

Mai (1): "There is discrimination between males and females, for sure."

Mai (2): "Let's take my neighbour as an example. He has four daughters and one son. Each daughter was given a plot of land while the son was given one more car, some more money besides a plot of land."

Ly: "In my family, my uncles were given 1,000 square metres of land by my grandparents, while my mother was given 400 square metres only."

Quy: "People in the past believed that daughters do not need to be given anything because they will get married and go. But the sons will live with them, take care of them for their whole life, so the sons deserve more."

Conversation between urban Vietnamese girls

Young women tended to have less access to resources than their male peers, particularly in contexts where gender norms and attitudes to marriage operated in discriminatory ways. Girls are considered, as one of the girls below says, to be 'temporary'.

**"They can only give a girl a small plot to stay on temporarily."**

Facilitator: "Can you sell that land?"

**"No, you can't, you can't sell, they can't allow you to sell."**

"Why can't you sell it?"

**"They think women are meant to get married and go and men are meant to stay and develop the family."**

"Why?"

**"Because we are considered to be temporary."**

Conversation between the facilitator and rural Ugandan girls

Rural boys and girls in both Vietnam and Uganda felt that discrimination on account of gender was combined with discrimination against poor people. For girls, this meant that they did not know how to get loans, but they also "do not dare ask for a loan". Rural boys in Vietnam stressed that some people "lack credibility from the community" because they do not have stable employment. In addition, parents' fear of debt meant that parents were very resistant to the idea of their children borrowing money, limiting young men and women's access to credit, despite the responsibility placed upon them to support their families.

#### 5. Barriers to employment

Rural boys and girls in Brazil, Vietnam and Uganda also talked about the problems of not having access to information, which in turn could limit access to the labour market. They suggested that more community activism around ways to find work would be useful; as Khanh, a rural Vietnamese young man put it, "many people in rural areas wish to find better jobs but they do not know where to apply". In addition to resources, information also flowed from work: in Uganda young women and men who worked were more likely to be aware of legislation around employment rights, and were also more likely to trust their community leaders and government to protect these rights.

Access to job opportunities was seen as further limited by discriminatory attitudes, particularly in relation to physical appearance. Young men and women in all three countries talked about how attributes such as physical strength, height or beauty



influenced access to job opportunities, regardless of education, skills or qualifications. This emphasis on physical attributes was seen as negative for both young men and young women.

*"Let's take my banking major as an example. When we apply for a job, they require a qualification – certainly. But they also prefer good appearance. For instance, women taller than 160cm are preferable to be a banking executive."*

Mai, 20, urban Vietnamese young woman

Financial burdens continue to rest on male shoulders, but certain jobs were seen as not available to them, either because they are regarded as 'feminine', or because male bosses are more likely to hire women for certain jobs.

*"You may reach an office and if you find a fellow man, that man will be in favour of females, unlike you who are of the same sex. They will tend not to give you [the job] because they have interest in female people."*

*"There are jobs that are strictly for women or girls, like babysitting – a man is left out on the grounds that he cannot look after children."*

*"There are some jobs that society puts aside for girls, like secretarial and receptionist, yet men can also have an interest in that job. Even though you have the qualifications, they will not give you such a job."*



Participants from Brazil.

*"At times there are employers who would like to use women because they are easy to control and they find it hard to control men."*

Conversation between urban Ugandan boys

For girls, this discrimination is overlaid with risk, as Anh from Vietnam acknowledges:

Kim: *"It seems that female salespeople attract more customers and are more sympathetic. There are two shops selling corn around my school gate, but the one with a pretty girl always has more customers."*

Anh: *"A girl needs to have a good-looking face to be a sales staff. But it is easy to be abused, quite a high risk."*

Conversation between urban Vietnamese young men

Without the confidence to claim employment rights or report sexual harassment, girls were likely simply to leave their job.

Facilitator: "What are the obstacles that stand in your way when you look for a job after studies?"

*"Sexual harassment, most especially on the side of the girls. The boss will first want to have sex before employing you [all laugh], so you will first play sex with him before in case you want to be employed."*

"So what do you do, do you give in or do you leave?" [All laugh] *"You first resist; if he insists, you leave the job."*

Conversation between urban Ugandan girls

## 6. Voice and collective action

The following section discusses some of the ways in which young men and women suggest such inequitable attitudes and structures might be challenged. One of the main ones was through voice and collective action.

Hué: *"[We] need organisations' intervention and consultation to raise awareness of adults and parents. Frequently talk to parents, express our opinions to make parents understand us better."*

Nguyêt: *"I think women's participation in the community should be promoted. If women expand their networks and interact with more people, they will want to find jobs outside instead of staying at home or farming."*

Hué: *"I think that the leaders who have access to more information can share their knowledge with local people. For example, a village leader can share with others about his/her meetings"*

*at the commune. It applies with information about employment and loans as well. If lacking of capacity and knowledge, people may not be able to do any jobs except for farming and raising livestock. We can organise training to help farmers scale up their business and learn from each other's experience."*

Conversation between rural Vietnamese girls

Young men and women also discussed the importance of their own roles in challenging norms and attitudes and the importance of being empowered to speak out.

Huê: *"I think there is a perception in society that women and girls are not thoughtful and have no critical thinking. Therefore, they believe that we cannot contribute much and there is no need to refer to our viewpoints and ideas."*

Nguyễn: *"I just overhear from my parents sometimes but I do not have the right to take part in or make any decisions."*

Huê: *"Firstly, we should raise our voices, speak up and confirm that our voices and participation need to be considered; they are not for nothing. Secondly, other people need to listen and appreciate our ideas. They only can judge whether our ideas are good or not after they listen."*

Conversation between rural Vietnamese girls

Solutions posed by girls were about improved flows of information but also about shifting beliefs about girls and young women speaking out and making their voices heard. When asked about community responses to gender-based violence, for example, rural Vietnamese girls responded in unison that they had never been asked for their own views.

Within the context of being heard, therefore, girls recognised that taking space was as important as being given it. This was not just a question of individual girls, but one of solidarity between groups, as Antonia highlights below. Girls saw themselves as potential agents of social transformation, but recognised that change takes time and is not easy.

*"When I started to play ball I suffered a lot with prejudice. We need the authorities' help, but the first step must be ours. We need to get together, to form a group, and show that we can do even better than men."*

Antonia, urban Codo girl, Brazil

*"I think some women don't know how to express themselves in public, and if you can't express*

*yourself, who will express things for you? I hear that in banks, you are asked questions to fill in some documents, and if you can't express yourself and be confident to speak, then you will not access the services."*

Gorretti, rural Ugandan girl

Quy: *"I find it hard to propagandise widely. For example, I participate in Women Union, but sometimes I am too busy to attend the meeting/campaign while Women Union carries out the propaganda campaign. Moreover, those perceptions are deeply rooted in our minds so we can't change everything overnight."*

Huê: *"We may lobby to change policy, mobilise the people, but it can't be changed overnight."*

Conversation between urban Vietnamese young women

Coming through from all of our discussions with young women and men was the recognition that change requires a range of participants; not just legislation, not just market opportunities, not just parental support and not just a language of equality. It is the combination of changes in these different spaces that can create virtuous circles, multiply opportunities and embed sustainable gender equality.

*"Parents and families, children, communities, the association president, the Mayor, teachers and guards: everyone can do something to help to change this reality."*

Mayara, rural Brazilian girl

The ability to imagine a different and better world is also essential for change. By fostering individual and collective ability to imagine change, there is the possibility to influence the attitudes, behaviour, laws and policies that restrict girls' and young women's pathways to power.

Facilitator: "If no one forced you to get married, you have access to credit, you go to school, if you had good clothes, how will you feel as a Busota girl?" Gorretti: *"I will be employable everywhere I go."*

[All girls laugh]

"You will be like MTN [the local mobile provider] everywhere you go!"

Gorretti: *"That's true, because if you are educated, you can get a job anywhere."*

Mary: *"Life will be good because I would have achieved my goals."*

Conversation between Ugandan rural female young women



ত্যাঁর জন্য দায়  
মিন না মঞ্জুরের দাবীতে  
নাও ও বিক্ষোভ  
নিস এন্ড ইন্ডাস্ট্রিয়াল ওয়ার্কার্স ফেডারেশন



# Girls' leadership and collective action – from participation to power

# 5

## CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

### Article 7

Parties... shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right... to participate in non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

## 1 Introduction: 'A single person can't change the world' – girls' pathways to power

*"Supporting women's rights organisations... to make change and build strong and inclusive social movements is the most effective mechanism for ensuring sustainable change in the lives of women and girls."*

UK Department for International Development<sup>1</sup>

*"You have to raise collective awareness... you have to communicate with other people, because a single person can't change the world. An idea can, certainly, but you need other hands, other eyes, other voices to make it a stronger initiative."*

Cecilia Garcia Ruiz, young woman, Mexico<sup>2</sup>

We have seen many examples in this report of girls and young women who have succeeded in overcoming the structural, economic and political barriers that have prevented them achieving equality, whether this is at home or at work or in the public sphere. But we have also seen just how difficult this is. We have looked at some of the reasons why this might be, both in terms of attitudes and social norms and in relation to the structural barriers to progress.

We noted in Chapter 1 that in recent years, considerable resources from international organisations, international and national NGOs and the private sector have been channelled into investing in girls, especially adolescents. However, much of this has been 'supply-driven', focusing on individual change and stressing the return on 'investment', rather than necessarily the rights, wellbeing and contributions of girls themselves, working collectively to bring about change. While it is clearly important for an individual girl to go to school, and to gain the confidence, respect and skills needed to negotiate her way safely through life, systemic and cultural change are also critical to creating the transformation that is needed.

Otherwise, what is happening, as a report from the Association for Women's Rights



A 'Let Girls Be Born' rally in India.

in Development (AWID) notes, is that "the 'leaves' – individual women and girls – are receiving growing attention without support for 'the roots' – the sustained, collective action by feminists and women's rights activists<sup>3</sup> and organisations that has been at the centre of women's rights advances throughout history." Support for these 'roots' is still limited – in 2010, the median annual income of over 740 women's organisations around the world was \$20,000.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, as Ruby Johnson from FRIDA, which funds young women's organisations, notes: "young women and girls themselves have had limited opportunity to influence this funding. They continue to be seen as beneficiaries rather than actors who are well placed to decide on how and where funding can be used to empower and protect the rights of women and girls. Their unique voice is not being heard enough, despite the many examples of their collective organising around the world as a key pathway to change."<sup>5</sup>

Research in West Africa also found that "many programmes that support gender equality (for example, assistance to gender ministries and leadership training) tend to be underfunded or not continued over a long enough period to ensure their sustainability". In addition, it notes that many donors, particularly multilateral organisations, are reluctant "to frame women's issues as political ones, thus denying support to many

initiatives that seek to challenge the status quo, including ones that take on entrenched interests that have historically dominated power and the political system in their countries".<sup>6</sup>

Feminist scholar Srilatha Batliwala agrees: "Many donors have both moved away from support for movement-building strategies, towards gender mainstreaming, gender components in larger development projects, and the 'investing in women and girls' approach, which tends to instrumentalise women as the new saviours of their communities and economies."<sup>7</sup>

This instrumentalist approach is evident in many projects and programmes that prioritise girls and young women. This chapter will show why and how it is harder for them to challenge the status quo. But it will also show how, when they have taken collective action and built alliances with women's groups and organisations, girls and young women have managed to bring about changes in both policy and practice, building real 'empowerment'. For example, in many countries, both North and South, there has been a revival of feminism, with young women and girls leading and joining different social movements to bring about change, and putting the issues of gender and social justice onto the international agenda. Girls' and young women's contributions are becoming more visible in these movements and are creating their own successful campaigns.

An Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) report in 2013, mapping recent initiatives for women and girls, pointed out: "It is precisely because of the systemic challenges to women's empowerment that connecting individual supports to a collective process is particularly crucial. Programmes that seek both to empower women and facilitate supportive collective processes to ensure they can actually control the gains experienced, are more likely to demonstrate greater lasting success and transformative potential."<sup>8</sup> Their words ring true when we look at the past – collective organising has been key to most of the world's successful social and political struggles: for example, women's suffrage, the fight against apartheid, and civil rights and trades-union movements – moving from voice to choice and eventually to control.

In this chapter we look at what enables girls and young women to challenge power and the power-holders and speak out about discriminatory social norms, violations of rights, and injustice. We focus on what makes it possible for girls to participate with others, and what prevents them. We examine the role of campaigning and activism, and the new forms of organising, such as social media, art, music, dance and theatre, that so many girls and young women activists are using to bring about social and political change.

And we argue that to support girls' participation and leadership, we need more than just a focus on empowering individual girls to bring about change. We need to change society as a whole.



*Women dressed as suffragettes campaigning in London.*

## 2 Standing up and speaking out – from voice to activism

*"We all have a responsibility to listen to what young people, particularly girls and young women, are saying."*

Graça Machel<sup>9</sup>

*"Words are not 'just' words; they are the cornerstones for meaning and actions. To stand up and speak out is to move and change the world around us."*

Kadra Rayale, Girls' Speakers' Bureau, Plan Canada<sup>10</sup>

Girls have a right to have a say in decisions that affect their lives. Individually, this means knowing about the world and their place in it and understanding their rights; something that is best achieved through quality education, mentoring and the opportunity to share experiences and learn in grassroots organisations as well as formal training. Girls then need the confidence to find their voice and to speak out in order to effect change. Finally, this needs to be supported by institutional mechanisms, such as laws and policies, that ensure girls' voices are both heard and amplified.

Many projects are led by young women themselves, often working with adolescents and girls, with young women playing a bridging role to girls. FRIDA, the young feminist fund, supports Radio Udayapur in Nepal, a community radio station run by girls and young women. It is campaigning radio, challenging entrenched beliefs "that boys should do everything". Bandana Danuwar, the group leader and station manager, has seen the group's self-belief and credibility in the community grow: "We are broadcasting women's views, perspectives and stories from community development to political issues on our radio. We are young women under 30 and we believe that if young girls get together to remove patriarchy, they can do it."<sup>11</sup>

As another group leader from the Girl Guides in the UK points out: "If girls know their own rights they can... say to someone that 'hey, that's not right, what you are doing'."<sup>12</sup> Or as 16-year-old Win win, from Indonesia, who belongs to a village children's group, says: *"As a result of the campaigning in our group we know that we have rights."*





A consultation with young women in Vietnam.

*If our parents ask us to get married early we will refuse.*"<sup>13</sup>

But knowing their rights is not always enough to enable girls to stand up and speak out. Exercising those rights is much more complex, because girls and young women are confronted with so many attitudinal and structural barriers and there are limited mechanisms in place to allow for girls to have a voice and be heard. As this 17-year-old from Uganda pointed out: *"Young people rarely get chances to participate in community decision-making. All I know is that when you raise your hand they never select you to say a word. I have never had that chance."*<sup>14</sup>

Even finding your own voice, let alone moving to action and activism, may be difficult if you are young and female, especially if you are an adolescent.

Research by the British Overseas Development Institute in Uganda found that: "Adolescents are neither recognised nor expected to participate, as they are considered too young to contribute to what is considered an adult domain... Particular gender-based limitations on girls' participation arise out of still deeply entrenched ideologies of 'public' and 'private' domains, whereby women and girls are restricted to the latter."<sup>15</sup>

A study by the World Bank with 800 girls and boys aged 11 to 17 in eight countries asked them about their lives, their use of time, their aspirations and hopes for the future, and what it means to be a girl or a boy today.<sup>16</sup> From the Dominican Republic to Yemen, there was consensus that: "Boys can be as free as they wish. Girls cannot go out in the evening. Boys can go anywhere they wish."

## THE POWER OF 'SOAP' IN NICARAGUA

**Jean Casey**, with Director **Amy Bank**, explains how 'Sexto Sentido', an 'edutainment' television programme that aims both to entertain and to promote social change, has challenged established attitudes – with young women centre stage both as actors and audience.

'Sexto Sentido' (Sixth Sense) was launched by feminist NGO Puntos de Encuentro in 2001, when it was watched by 70 per cent of the available TV-viewing audience. It has now been broadcast in eight countries and continues to air in re-runs in many of them.

The programme followed the lives of six adolescents and young adults and their families and friends as they navigated the ups and downs of everyday life, living through violence and sexual abuse within the family, facing discrimination by sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race and class. It followed the characters as they took responsibility for their own lives, including the consequences of risky sexual behaviour, such as unplanned pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. Young women were a key target audience, as they were more likely to watch the programme regularly and be influenced by it.<sup>17</sup> The idea behind the series is not to instruct but to open up dialogue and encourage critical thinking so that people can decide for themselves how they want to live their lives.

Perhaps the most controversial storyline was one that depicted the rape of a central female character, Frankie, and included an abortion. Frankie is supported by her friend Sofia as they consider the option of the emergency contraceptive pill, until they realise it is too late. Despite these controversial story lines – in a country heavily influenced by the Catholic Church, where the law doesn't allow abortion even in case of rape – the show was not censored, perhaps because of its

popularity, and perhaps because the story was told with utmost respect for all points of view and religious beliefs, with the main emphasis being to show that young women are capable of thinking through and making difficult choices for themselves.<sup>18</sup>

Amy Bank says, "We recognise that watching a TV programme once a week won't change the world," so Puntos de Encuentro developed a holistic

strategy combining the different elements of their work – their radio show and magazine, their leadership training and coalition-building efforts – to connect individual viewers to a range of services and organisations. They also developed educational campaigns and distributed activist packs based on the series, which were used by community groups and schools to open up discussion on a range of topics that had previously been difficult to tackle.

Following the success of 'Sexto Sentido', a second

series, 'Contracorriente' (Turning the Tide), was launched in 2012, tackling some of the implications of globalisation on families' daily lives by shining a light on young women's economic struggles in many different arenas, including as individuals, within the family, in the informal labour market and the free trade zone factories where many young women work, and with commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking. Again, the series connects viewers to services, and sets out to increase active citizenship by encouraging them to defend, claim and exercise their rights.



PUNTOS DE ENCUENTRO



International Women's Day in Bangladesh.

Lack of freedom of movement alone may prevent girls and young women from participating or taking collective action. Even attending a public programme may mean they have disobeyed a father, brother, uncle or mother, as this girl taking part in a consultation for adolescents in Pakistan admitted. *"I've come to this workshop today secretly. My father does not like this and says I should stay home,"* she confessed. Her mother and brother, however, had supported her involvement and had encouraged her to attend.<sup>19</sup> Research for this report in India found that parents keep their daughters at home for fear of sexual harassment, which means that if anything happens, they may not share it with family members, fearing their freedom of movement outside the home will be restricted.<sup>20</sup>

Research with young women from Central America found that many young women activists had faced opposition from family, friends or the wider community.<sup>21</sup> Often the accusation was that by working together with other women they would become, or be seen as, lesbian. *"My friends criticise me – they say 'why do you go there. There they just talk about crazy stuff, you'll bore yourself around women and turn into a lesbian'."* Another young woman activist said: *"I can't talk about my work with [my family]; they discriminate against me, saying that I am a 'warrior' for defending the rights of women."*

A report on youth activism noted: "Parents often expect a measure of independence and even defiance from their sons that they do not expect from their daughters. Indeed, parenting

patterns can promote boys' independence and autonomy and girls' interdependence, dependence, and/or passivity."<sup>22</sup>

Young women and girls thrive through the support of mentors, role models, safe spaces and empowerment programmes. It is also vital to work with men and boys, families and community organisations, and with governance structures that prevent girls and young women charting their own pathways to power. The media can also help bring to light issues that girls and young women are grappling with and that society prefers to ignore.

### 3 What leadership means to girls

*"The concept of leadership remains a male paradigm. Despite the call for a new breed of leader, the alignment of leadership and masculinity continues to be deeply embedded in the collective psyche of society and organisations."*

Dr Hannah Piterman, Co-Founder of Gender Worx, Australia<sup>23</sup>

*"The leadership training I did here was a big turning point in my life. I now have the courage to speak in a group like this. I know my rights as a girl and how to advocate for those rights and take them."*

Rana, 16, Alexandria, Egypt<sup>24</sup>

The idea of 'leadership' is very much in fashion. There are hundreds of leadership programmes for girls in many countries around the world. Some are aimed at



a specific group, by age or ethnicity. Others are linked to sports, academics or political life. Many focus on developing confidence and self-esteem alongside acquiring new skills and knowledge. A report by CARE defines a girl leader as: "an active learner who believes that she can make a difference in her world, and acts individually and with others to bring about positive change".<sup>25</sup> In Nicaragua, this 16-year-old girl said: *"To be a leader you should have good self-esteem, first clarify all your doubts, fears – help yourself to feel better as a person. All women can become good leaders but they have to feel good about themselves."*<sup>26</sup>

However, in many countries and cultures, the idea of a leader has a community-oriented focus, as Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women explains: "When you are in a leadership position... you actually realise that you are not there for yourself: that there are a whole lot of women that you actually need to represent and to work for and to empower... so continuously linking your own progress with the progress of the other women remains important."<sup>27</sup>

Ruby Johnson from FRIDA, The Young Feminist Fund, notes that: "there is a growing trend of young women to use co-leadership models to share power. FRIDA does this, and many organisations that FRIDA supports have this model. It is an exciting and innovative take on leadership that in many ways takes away from 'individual' and moves towards the collective – and also makes it less scary."<sup>28</sup>

Research from Central America asked 29 young women leaders about the qualities a female leader should possess.<sup>29</sup> These were their responses:

- Capacity to empower and act in solidarity.
- Communicate, guide and coordinate the group.
- Personal qualities: dynamic, active, empathetic.
- Commitment to defending women's rights.

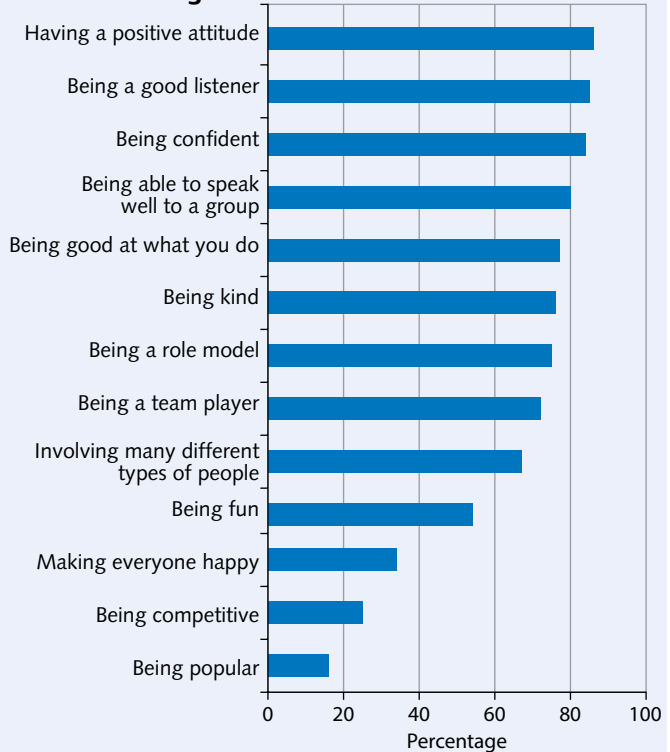
One young woman leader from Guatemala explained: *"My leadership, for me, is a moral and political commitment, a commitment to humanity and to women. I have participated in different spaces – social spaces and work spaces and at a*

*family level in my community. I have been a promoter of the participation of women, promoter of peace in Guatemala, and of both women's and mixed organisations. I have participated directly in political spaces, as a participating citizen. I have been a youth activist."*<sup>30</sup>

## 4 Being a good leader – what girls think

Other definitions of what leadership means to girls in particular are difficult to find, but those that exist seem to show that girls may have a more inclusive approach. A 2007 report by the Girl Scout Research Institute, based on research conducted with teenage girls in the US, shows that girls perceive leadership as inclusive and shared, rather than authoritative and positional. The report also quoted earlier research which found that "for girls, leadership is 'more than the superlative – the first, the strongest, the most vocal'. Leadership is not just about 'taking charge'; rather, it is seen as being 'charged with taking a stand and having a vision.'"<sup>31</sup>

### What makes a good leader?<sup>32</sup>





*Leadership training in Uganda.*

The report notes that: "To many girls, the leadership they see is 'positional', which they describe as 'boy' leadership, inherently different from the qualities they associate with 'girl' leadership. The former involves authority, control and ego, while the latter is about being a good listener, building consensus, and ensuring happiness for others. In other words, leadership is about the *qualities* one has as well as about one's *actions*. Girls also describe a model of leadership and the acquisition of leadership skills that are a blend of what they want for themselves (what they are going to get) and what they give to others (to make a difference in the world)."<sup>33</sup> Their ideas about leadership vary according to age. Encouragingly, 69 per cent said they thought they were already leaders in some areas of their lives.

A 2013 report by Girl Guiding UK found that the majority of girls felt there were not enough women in leadership positions:

- Two in three girls aged 11 to 21 think that there are not enough women in leadership positions in the UK, rising to 71 per cent of 16 to 21-year-olds.
- 54 per cent of those aged 16 to 21 think that employers, at least to some extent, prefer to employ men over women.
- Most think that a better gender balance would be beneficial – 63 per cent of girls and young women say that more female leaders would mean a better deal for women in general.
- The lack of women in leadership positions has a mixed effect on girls' ambitions. Just over half are to some extent put off, feeling that they have less chance of succeeding themselves, with almost one in three feeling this quite strongly. However, almost as many say that this lack of women in leadership positions makes them feel more determined to succeed themselves (46 per cent feel this strongly, 29 per cent feel this quite strongly).
- Over half of those aged seven to 21 would like to be a leader in their chosen profession. This is true across the age range, but highest for those aged 16 to 21, with almost six in 10 saying this.<sup>34</sup>

Being female and a leader is not easy. If girls are to be leaders – in their schools, communities or countries – it is vital that they have both role models and mentors.

## 'EVEN THOUGH I AM A GIRL, I CAN BE A LEADER'

**Nikki van der Gaag** visits a youth group in rural Indonesia who are campaigning for change.

Nurul's home has a traditional, wooden veranda where bunches of beans are drying. We enter and sit on the floor. Her mother and father greet us and then retire to the back room.

The eight young people I have come to meet are from the village youth group. They are all around 16 or 17. Nurul, aged 17, is the leader, while Mohamed and Agus are advisers.

I ask them about the benefits of working as a group. Agus is the first to reply. He says: "As individuals it is difficult to find a role, but as a group we can share thinking and experiences with our friends. If one of us has a problem we can share it with the others." Win agrees: "We can also share ideas and knowledge with each other."

Nurul says: *"By having a group with boys and girls together, we can find a solution to our problems together – for example, we can have a discussion about why girls are not allowed to go to evening meetings and find a way around it."*

They talk about whether boys or girls are usually leaders, and although they have already shown the disadvantages that girls may face – not being able to go out, school dropout, or early marriage, which

has been the focus of one of their campaigns – the boys seem to agree that girls make better leaders, at least in their group.

Agus says this is because: "Girls have more confidence than us boys – they talk a lot. When boys talk, the community will tell them they should be quiet. Boys joke a lot, girls are more serious, so girls are considered the leaders."

Nurul is not so sure: *"I may be the leader of this group but I think there is still a stereotype that boys should lead."*

She has talked earlier of her determination to campaign on child marriage and of other people's first reactions: *"Initially my friends and also the village elders mocked what I did... It was not easy. I tried to think positively all the time. Later, my campaign gave me a chance to speak at the national level and beyond... now [they] no longer think that way. At last they are beginning to see that child marriage has negative impacts on their children."*<sup>35</sup>

She adds that the initial opposition made her even more determined to succeed. *"It pushed me to perform more and better so I could be the leader – even though I am a girl."*





## 5 'Don't forget our President is a woman' – role models and mentors

*"We need leaders who really understand our needs and who understand gender equality. Women leaders in high positions of leadership inspire us. Me personally, when I see them, I know that I can be able to take a decision."*

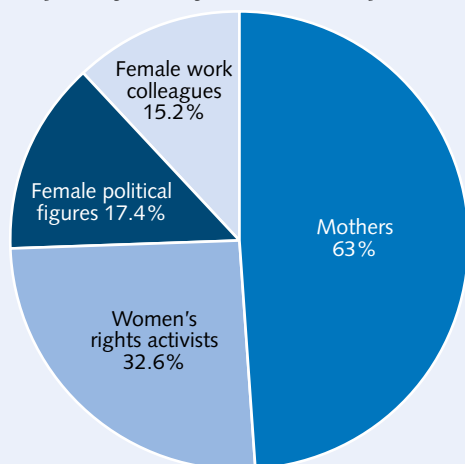
Adolescent girl from Rwanda<sup>36</sup>

*"Ordinary women in South Africa were highly motivated by seeing role models [of other women in positions of power]. That helped us to have women stand up for themselves. It didn't always solve the problems that we have... we have moved a long way in South Africa but, my God, we have a long way to go still."*

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka,  
UN Women<sup>37</sup>

Girls will often have a woman or women they can look up to, whether in their family and community or in the wider world. A Plan survey in Australia found that mothers were much the strongest role models for girls.<sup>38</sup> Research with 145 young women leaders from Central America also found that the majority (63 per cent) said their major influence had been their mothers.<sup>39</sup> Other influences included aunts, grandmothers and cousins. Female political figures had significantly less influence.

### Which women have influenced or inspired you in your leadership?<sup>40</sup>



PLAN/WILL BOASE

The report noted that: "Many of the young women who referred to their mothers also commented that they were often brought along to marches, talks and workshops at women's groups from a very young age. This initiated an interest in discussions of the adult women and over time led to the motivation for many of them to become organised and participate in such spaces. The information and conversation they observed represented an informal learning school."<sup>41</sup>

Questionnaires for the Plan cohort for this report however, found that although many young women mentioned their mother, out of 20 young urban and rural women in Uganda, 11 said that Rebecca Kadaga was the person who inspired them most.<sup>42</sup> She is the first woman Speaker in the Ugandan Parliament. *"My mother, and the Right Honourable Rebecca Kadaga, who is so determined, fighting for women's rights and also promoting girl-child education, like providing school fees for girls in both secondary and primary school. She is also*

*Speaker of  
Ugandan  
Parliament  
Rt. Hon.  
Rebecca  
Kadaga.*

**confident and respected by all but fears no one."** said Mary, aged 20.

Female role models for girls may also be 'celebrities' – singers and performers and actors – who may or may not provide a realistic or positive model for girls. The Plan Australia research found that these women made up around one in five of the role models that girls cited. Politicians were role models to only six per cent of girls, while businesswomen were role models to only two per cent.<sup>43</sup>

Another report noted that in sub-Saharan Africa, "girls frequently described their career and livelihood aspirations in terms of someone they admired and respected".<sup>44</sup> These could be women they know, such as teachers or doctors – as one report notes: "The need for women in leadership positions in schools in developing countries is important to ensure sensitivity within schools for the wellbeing of adolescent girls, to provide girls beginning to consider career choices with role models of women decision-makers and leaders, and to address issues of social justice by providing gender equity between adults within the education profession."<sup>45</sup>

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, illustrated the importance of role models when she told a story that she had heard from a UNESCO representative who visited a school in a remote village and observed a girl running around and playing with the boys in the school yard. The male Principal was appalled and reprimanded her for being rowdy by saying, "you are a little girl; you should be quiet and not running around making so much noise". The little girl pondered for a few seconds and said quietly: "Teacher, be careful how you talk to me. Don't forget our President is a woman." The President reflected how much she felt "heartened and encouraged" by this story and that for her, it meant that her inauguration as the first woman President in Africa "has brought hope to girls in Liberia and throughout Africa".<sup>46</sup>

But as we have seen in previous chapters, because the number of women like Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in positions of power is limited, girls may have fewer role models than boys. So when they are there, they can be very influential, as Heather Gault,



PLAN/MARC SCHLOSSMAN

member of Girlguiding's Advocate Panel, pointed out: "I studied computing in a male-dominated environment and some people told me I wasn't capable of succeeding in the industry because I am a woman. But one day I heard Perry Hewitt, Chief Digital Officer at Harvard University, speak and she left me feeling empowered. I'd love to have a job like hers in the future."<sup>47</sup>

As an adolescent girl in Rwanda pointed out: **"Laws or policies that encourage participation, especially for girls in decision-making, exist – but they are not well implemented, because girls and women are not visible in all domains of leadership."**<sup>48</sup>

Divisions among women themselves, by age, and related to ethnicity and sexuality, are another barrier that is not always discussed. Young entrepreneur Holly Ransom notes: **"In my discussions with young women around Australia, the challenges they face with older women in the workforce is one of the most frequent topics of conversation... The lack of support sourced from the 'sisterhood' is exacerbated by the comparative strength of male-dominated networks."**<sup>49</sup>

There are also barriers that relate to interconnecting identities – for example, as Ruby Johnson from FRIDA notes: "If you are young, indigenous and lesbian, it may be hard to know where you fit in – you feel excluded from the feminist movement, excluded from mainstream human rights and the development community, and also from the youth sector and even within the

*Liberia's  
President  
Ellen Johnson  
Sirleaf.*



*Young woman leader in Honduras.*

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LGBTQ community you are not sure if you are accepted."

Research for this report in 13 countries in West Africa also found that there was an increasing 'generational divide' that was "beginning to take on more importance in terms of generating societal conflict than either ethnicity or religion. The tensions in Nigeria's Niger Delta are increasingly pitting elders – who want to maintain their power over local resources – against the younger generation, who are fed up with the corruption that has taken root in their communities and the country as a whole."<sup>50</sup> The report notes that: "Women's groups that make the attempt to bring in younger women and girls into their midst can begin to address this new 'socio-cultural' fault line and many of the negative social ills (for example, drugs, prostitution) that are accompanying the economic dislocations that are being witnessed across the sub-region."<sup>51</sup>

In Nicaragua, young women reflected that the division and discrimination between women was a central challenge in advancing the struggle for women's rights. On the other hand, in many cases, they recognised the importance of mentoring

relationships with adult women, which can improve young women's self-esteem and confidence, giving them both practical and psychological support.<sup>52</sup> Young women can also be very effective mentors for other young women and girls, as can supportive men. "Among other things, male mentors can help female protégées overcome discriminatory barriers in place at traditional organisations," said John J Soisk, associate professor of management at Penn State University in the US.<sup>53</sup>

A report by Girls Speak notes that building a network of advocates and mentors for girls is as important as training them and building their confidence: "Time and time again, girls wish out loud for more support from those around them. Community and family members can become advocates and mentors for girls. Once family and community members begin to appreciate girls' needs, they require help in identifying specific roles they can play in supporting girls... If safety on the way to school is a problem, for example, brothers can escort and chaperone. If doing homework is important, parents can be supportive in finding the right time and place for girls."<sup>54</sup>



## 6 One and one is eleven – the power of collective organising

*"To feel that we are not alone is important, that there are other women doing the same work as us. To share spaces together and devise actions together gives us the strength to continue."*

Young woman leader, Central America<sup>55</sup>

*"Now we don't tolerate anything. We have made a group of girls. If someone teases us, we call the group."*

Girl from Delhi<sup>56</sup>

All over the world, girls and young women are creating their own spaces to campaign and lobby for change. They are mobilising in many different kinds of ways – youth groups, student groups, women's groups, informal networks, formal NGOs and as part of social movements. Sometimes this is as young women together, sometimes with young men, sometimes with older generations. They are campaigning against sexism, discrimination and violence against women and girls, or for sexual and reproductive health and rights and good governance and democracy.

They are clear about the benefits of working together rather than individually, as Jacqueline, aged 15, from Malawi explains:

*"If girls stick together, we will be able to tackle our problems."*<sup>57</sup>

Or as 20-year-old Gema Aguilar, group leader of the 'Group of Adolescent and Young Women Migrants' from Nicaragua, said: *"When you are organised there is a greater bond between young women. We all follow the same goal: to help other people living in similar situations and to make them understand we are not living that way any more because this organisation came to help us... The fact of being organised gave us a vision; the vision of growing. Before, I was a member, now I'm a leader... now that we are organised, they are taking us as young people into account."*<sup>58</sup>

Girls and young women have also been involved in mobilising alongside young men and with older women as part of more established social movements. This is important, says the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID): "If there is a genuine interest in supporting and developing movements, it is critical that newer initiatives also seek out and join efforts with existing movements."<sup>59</sup>



*'The life of women is not negotiable. No more femicide.'*

While, as we have seen, it also put young women at risk of gender-based violence, the Arab Spring in many Middle Eastern countries after 2010 gave young women – especially those from poorer backgrounds – access to power, as activists and protest leaders.<sup>60</sup> In 2011, 26-year-old Asmaa Mahfouz from Egypt made a YouTube video calling all women to join her on 25 January to protest in Tahrir Square, Cairo – a video that went viral and turned her into a symbol of the Egyptian revolution.<sup>61</sup> Later that year, Yemeni activist Tawakul Karman, twice imprisoned by the Yemeni government, won a Nobel Peace Prize for her tireless awareness-raising around women's rights and child marriage.<sup>62</sup> Throughout protests in many countries, women stood side by side with men in demanding political change, despite the risks they were taking.

However, much of the support for girls and women seems to have fallen away after the initial uprisings. Though there continues to be solidarity among feminists and women's rights groups, they have been accused of promoting Western values at odds with the 'Arab way of life' and with Islam.<sup>63</sup> Although all but two Arab countries have ratified the UN's main women's rights declaration, CEDAW, many have done so with significant reservations.<sup>64</sup> For example, many States across the Middle East have reservations to Articles dealing with a woman's right to freely contract and own property, to retain her own nationality and to pass that nationality on to her children.<sup>65</sup> In addition, there was a reduction in the number of women holding seats in parliaments across the regions following the uprisings, and the region has seen a large increase in gender-based violence, particularly in Egypt.<sup>66,67</sup>

Young Yemeni feminist Alaa Al-Eryani, who launched a Facebook page dedicated to Yemen's Feminist moment, states that activists have to work against tough opposition: *"I got many more negative reactions than positive ones [to my being an activist]. I have been accused of wanting to destroy Yemeni girls: I was told that they are conservative and that I am trying to take them away from religion and traditions. These people believe it is not allowed for women to ask for their rights."*<sup>68</sup>



ESPEN RASMUSSEN/PANOS PICTURES

Young women also need their own spaces, and to this end, there are now a number of grant-making organisations that support their collective organising. The Central American Women's Fund (FCAM) gives grants to women's grassroots organisations, with a special emphasis on young women.<sup>69</sup> Its founder Ana Criquillon says that the move towards young women organising collectively is still relatively new. FCAM sees its role not only in terms of capacity-building but to enable the young women to "have a collective voice that would be more powerful than individual voices together; and recognise themselves as a whole sector of the population that has its own agenda, its own priorities, should have its own leaders and [be able to] participate in civil society".<sup>70</sup>

FCAM has its own grantmaking programme for girl-led and driven organisations in the region, called Ola Joven (Young Waves).<sup>71</sup> Josefa, a leader for the Programme for Young Women in Esquipulas, Guatemala explained: "We organise video forums, meetings and workshops, even in places where there is no electricity. One can easily see the different attitude in those who participate in our activities, because they have been able to defend themselves in situations of aggression. They have the courage to say: 'No, enough is enough!'"<sup>72</sup>

32-year-old  
Nobel Peace  
Prize winner  
Tawakul  
Karman.

The importance of collective voice for young women is also recognised by organisations like FRIDA, the Young Feminist Fund which supports initiatives led by young women.<sup>73</sup> FRIDA's grant-making model is based on an FCAM model of participatory grantmaking where young women themselves make decisions about the funding. Mama Cash was the first international women's fund in the world. Founded in Amsterdam in 1983, each year it supports women's, girls' and trans-people's rights groups in order to strengthen collective action and defend, promote and advance their human rights.<sup>74</sup>

As we will see in the next section, young women's ability to use and access social media gives them unprecedented access that can potentially have a huge impact on social change.

## 7 Girls and social media – building a better world?

*"We can use the internet to find out how to combat [a] problem. We can alert everyone to the damage being done and get the authorities to do projects and allocate budgets to deal with this issue. We can also use ICT to contact the international community to ask for their help."*

Adela, 18, Bolivia<sup>75</sup>

*"I dream about a future where we all get provided with the kind of technological tools to be able to be part of this global world, where we all can be connected, learn from each other and contribute with ideas to build a better world."*

Gema, 13, Ecuador<sup>76</sup>

Although, as we saw in Chapter 2, the media and social media can reinforce sexism, it can also be a positive tool for girls and young women, who are speaking out and organising using social media, which has opened up new forms of participation. Young people are at the frontline in the use of new technologies, and many are using them to campaign on climate change, human rights or feminism. According to Laurie Penny, contributing editor to the *New Statesman* magazine in the UK, "what the internet means is that we can't ignore each other. It also means people are a lot more educated than they were in the 60s and 70s when consciousness was about finding each other; the internet makes that faster. Sexism is becoming more apparent to girls at an ever younger age."<sup>77</sup>

The increasing use of the internet and mobile phones all over the world is allowing girls who might not be allowed to attend meetings or to go to demonstrations to find a way to be heard. As this young woman from Mauritania said: *"Fortunately for us, the internet gives us freedom since it takes us out to other people, places and other realities. No one controls where we go with the internet. It is for us a way of escaping from our closed society. It is vital to us, it gives us liberty."*<sup>78</sup>





## GIRLS' FAST-TALK

In 2011, Plan organised a 'Fast Talk' with 33 girls between the ages of 12 and 18 from 13 countries on their views of the potential of ICTs in girls' empowerment and development.<sup>81</sup>

Many girls and young women explained how they had used the internet to campaign for changes in their schools, communities or even internationally:

- “Those gadgets help me campaign for social change, especially parents who think that girls and boys should be treated differently in term of access to education, economy and so on. I want to support campaigns for gender equality using these gadgets. I want to spread the message with technology. I want to have boys’ and girls’ equality.”

Vega, 17, Indonesia

- *"I could link up with girls through social-media websites to advocate and share issues affecting girls and together we can find solutions. Together with other people in my community, we can create awareness of the significance of the girl child and help boost girls' morale. I could also communicate with policy makers to formulate policies to address some of these problems."*

Deborah, 17, Ghana

- "... [My parents] used to give me physical punishment when I could not solve my homework, until one day I went to the internet and got information about my rights... child abuse and other topics... which I made known to my parents... Now they have changed in a positive way: they treat me well and I am very happy to have achieved this major change in my family."

Francisca, 15, Bolivia



Themes from the  
Fast-talk process  
emerge as a Wordle.

However, a digital divide remains. Young women interviewed for this report in rural India told us that their access to and knowledge of social media was limited and often information available online was passed down to them through male family members. They had no direct access, although they were well aware of television, radio and print. As this girl from Delhi explained: *“[In order to be successful in life] being a bookworm is not enough. One needs to have knowledge of the outer world.”*<sup>79</sup>

Another young woman, from the Mang'elete area of Kenya, went further:  
***"Lack of information and education is a way***

*to keep women down. Men do not want to share power. But they will have to. We see – and our mothers see – how life improves when we know more and feel stronger and are able to do more.*"<sup>80</sup> For her and her friends, the radio was the most important way of accessing outside information.

Girls and young women in many countries are also using social media to shame perpetrators of violence or abuse and offer support to victims. Asri, aged 16, from Indonesia, explains how she and her friends *“created pages through social media like Twitter and Facebook to campaign about [violence in schools] publicly. Surprisingly our messages on Facebook and Twitter were*

*read by media and we were invited by one local TV channel in Jakarta to a TV talk show about bullying... We were so happy that we were able to spread the message publicly."*<sup>82</sup>

A number of websites have been set up to expose sexism and harassment. We saw in Chapter 2 how the online site Everyday Sexism allowed girls and women from all over the world to post stories of sexual harassment.<sup>83</sup> There are many others, such as the Blank Noise Project, a community public-art project that seeks to confront street harassment of women, known as 'eve-teasing', in India, where there is also an app called Fightback which serves as a panic button for women who are victims of violence.<sup>84,85</sup>

AMPLIFY encourages activism on topics such as LGBTQI rights and abortion, which links girls and boys from different countries through an International Youth Activist Network.<sup>86</sup> Other spaces include: RadFemHub<sup>87</sup>, Guerrilla Girls<sup>88</sup>, Feministing<sup>89</sup>, The Pursuit of Harpyness<sup>90</sup>, Gender Across Borders (GAB)<sup>91</sup>, Jezebel<sup>92</sup>, feminist.com<sup>93</sup>, UK Feminista<sup>94</sup> and many more.

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) based in Canada and with offices in South Africa and Mexico, launched the Young Feminist Wire in 2010 with the intention of creating a global online community platform for and by young feminists working on gender equality and women's rights issues around the world. The aim of the Young Feminist Wire online is to support young feminists in their activism through sharing information and resources, building international and regional contacts, strengthen their capacity in blogging and social media, and expand their understanding of movement building and women's rights issues.<sup>95</sup>

As the Barnard Center for Research on Women pointed out in a report called #Femfuture: Online Revolution:<sup>96</sup> "Social media lowers the barriers to becoming politically active – you no longer have to organise a rally or show up at an obscure meeting to register your political protest; you can just start a Twitter account, an online petition, or a Facebook page. Sure, online organising definitely lacks the face-to-face value of old-school political meet-ups, but



it can have a profound impact both on the individuals participating and groups we target for change. Online-only feminist actions have forced Facebook to remove 'rapey' pages, funded the creation of lots of feminist media, and forced major companies to rethink sexist marketing."<sup>97</sup>

Social media gives young women the opportunity to tap into what governance specialist Shirin Rai calls 'spectacle' – the way in which the media interacts with dominant ways of thinking – and to challenge sexism and discrimination from below, so subtly undermining the status quo on gender equality.<sup>98</sup> As 17-year-old UK campaigner Yas Necati, who has had more than 52,000 signatures for her online petition for more effective sex education, told researchers for this report: *"Social media plays a huge role... it's nice to be able to go online and find like-minded people... it's almost like you're on equal ground with anyone else."*<sup>99</sup> But she also points out that interacting offline is also important, *"It's so easy to feel isolated as a campaigner, to just feel you're talking to your computer screen."*<sup>100</sup>

"Confidence is contagious," noted one respondent in research for this report in West Africa. The report also recommended including girls and young women within existing women's groups, because it allows women to pass on confidence and skills and adds to the number of voices in a group, which gives it more strength. It added that "women holding public office or female athletes engaging with communities can provide both women and girls with a sense of pride and ambition to reach further than was thought possible."<sup>101</sup>

*Asri and Vega with journalists from DAAI TV.*

## 8 Conclusion: the sky is not the limit

*"Parents and [decision makers]... must change the status quo so that girls are not of lower status and not regarded as the weaker sex. They must recognise that girls are important in nation building. If that happens, girls will be able to realise that the sky is not the limit, that they can reach the moon and stars above."*

Janice, 17, the Philippines<sup>102</sup>

We have seen in this chapter and throughout this report how girls and young women are speaking out, claiming new spaces and pushing for change. They are doing this individually and collectively. But they still face many structural and institutional barriers. There is opposition from parents or leaders in their communities, including religious leaders. And they cannot overcome this without support from others. As one report from the International Center for Research on Women<sup>103</sup> notes: "For girls in the developing world, being young and female is a double disadvantage in life, one they cannot overcome on their own..."

The pathway to power is a long one. But with supportive adults, both women and men, and collective organising, girls and young women are finding a way through. Andreas Saragih from Plan Indonesia observes: "Participation doesn't guarantee

power – but it is one step. Women are now more willing to express their opinions and men are starting to hear them."<sup>104</sup>

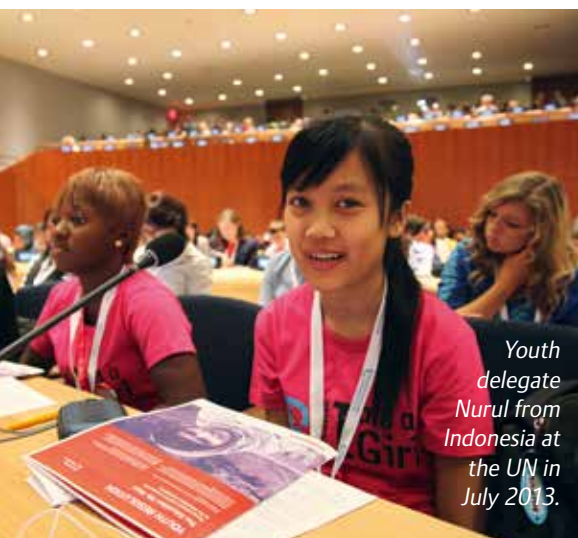
It is not just up to the girls themselves. Families, communities and policy makers must acknowledge girls' low status and the barriers and limitations that they experience, and enable them to overcome the constraints that disempower them. Policies and programmes can support girls, their families and their communities to bridge the gaps between their aspirations and their actual experiences.

Girls are not lacking motivation. Many still need skills, knowledge and confidence. They also need girl-only 'safe spaces' where they can share ideas and gain confidence. They need mechanisms in place so that they can share their opinions. And they need the attitudes, policies and the practices from society as a whole that will guarantee access to the same opportunities as their brothers to take a chance to change the world.

Girls and young women have a right to be listened to – by parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters, friends and teachers – but also by those who run our cities, the companies responsible for mobile phones and websites, and the international bodies that agree legislation in these arenas and the governments and officials who are supposed to put this legislation into practice.

Manal, 15, from Cairo, Egypt, who had been part of a Plan programme training young people, said: *"Nobody can take my rights from me now. These programmes are also changing the behaviour of the families – parents are seeing the difference in their daughters. We used to be silent at home and not say what we thought. We will not be silent any more."*<sup>105</sup>

When the voices of girls and women are heard and heeded – by families, in communities, in the media, by governments, policy makers, employers and religious leaders – then the real transformation can begin.



Youth delegate  
Nurul from  
Indonesia at  
the UN in  
July 2013.

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## GIRLS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

**Sarah Hendriks**, Plan's Global Gender Equality Advisor, discusses Plan's programme approach to achieving gender equality.

Gender equality is central to achieving our vision for change: a world in which all children, *both* girls and boys, realise their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity. In the communities where Plan works, girls and women often experience different and more challenging barriers to their rights. Therefore, to achieve equal rights as a core part of community development, Plan aims to tackle gender-based exclusion and injustice head on.

Child Centred Community Development (CCCD) is Plan's distinctive approach to working with communities to help more girls and boys realise their potential. It is built on two foundations: firstly, all children have the same universal human rights, which are set out in international treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Secondly, communities are powerful when they act together.

*Child protection workshop in Brazil.*



### CCCD STANDARD: TACKLING EXCLUSION AND GENDER INEQUALITY

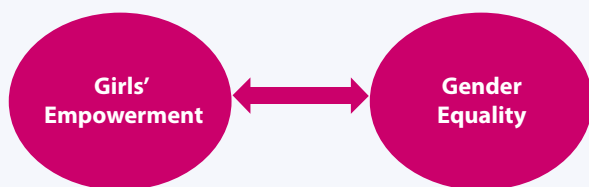
Wherever we work, Plan identifies which people are most excluded from social opportunities and least able to claim their rights. We help them come together to reflect on their own issues and claim their rights. We help them tackle the root causes of exclusion. In particular, we work with women and girls who are the most marginalised. Women and girls systematically have fewer opportunities, and face more barriers, than men and boys. This can limit their children's lives as well as their own.

The CCCD approach means that reducing gender inequality and exclusion requires understanding and renegotiating power. We aim to decrease power imbalances by addressing how gender and exclusion affect community members differently. To do this successfully, Plan is committed to reflect on our attitudes and behaviours, as individuals and as an organisation, to ensure that we are not unintentionally reinforcing the kinds of exclusion and power imbalances that we intend to address.

### Two sides of one coin

In 2011, Plan International approved its first Global Gender Equality Policy, comprised of 12 commitments to gender equality and children's rights.<sup>1</sup> One of these core commitments says that: *"Plan will promote the empowerment of girls and women in order to close gender gaps and ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to realise their rights."* To achieve this, Plan has put in place a dual approach of promoting both **gender equality** and **girls' empowerment**.

- **Integrating gender equality:** Both child rights and gender equality are equally important. Plan's commitment to gender equality means that we work with girls and with boys, with women and with men in order to achieve equal rights and equal opportunities for all. This means promoting gender equality in all our programmes and across our offices and staff.
- **Promoting girls' empowerment:** Plan also pursues specific programmes of empowerment for girls and women to close gender gaps and help overcome gender-based inequality, discrimination and injustice.



Both gender equality and girls' empowerment are at the heart of our global **Because I am a Girl** campaign. Like two sides of the same coin, girls' empowerment and gender equality are inter-dependent: one can't exist without the other.

Since we started this report series on the State of the World's Girls in 2007, Plan has been grappling with our understanding and approach to girls' empowerment. We have learned some very important lessons, including:

- **Girls' empowerment involves strengthening their ability to make choices about their futures, and developing their sense of self-worth.** Plan aims to support girls in acquiring assets and overcoming barriers so that they are empowered to enjoy their rights.
- **Girls are a diverse group: factors such as class, ethnicity, sexuality and age affect their empowerment.** These factors allow us to identify which groups of girls are most marginalised and require additional support towards empowerment.
- **Girls' empowerment flourishes in societies where girls' and women's rights are fulfilled, and where girls are valued equally with boys.** Girls' empowerment requires an enabling environment

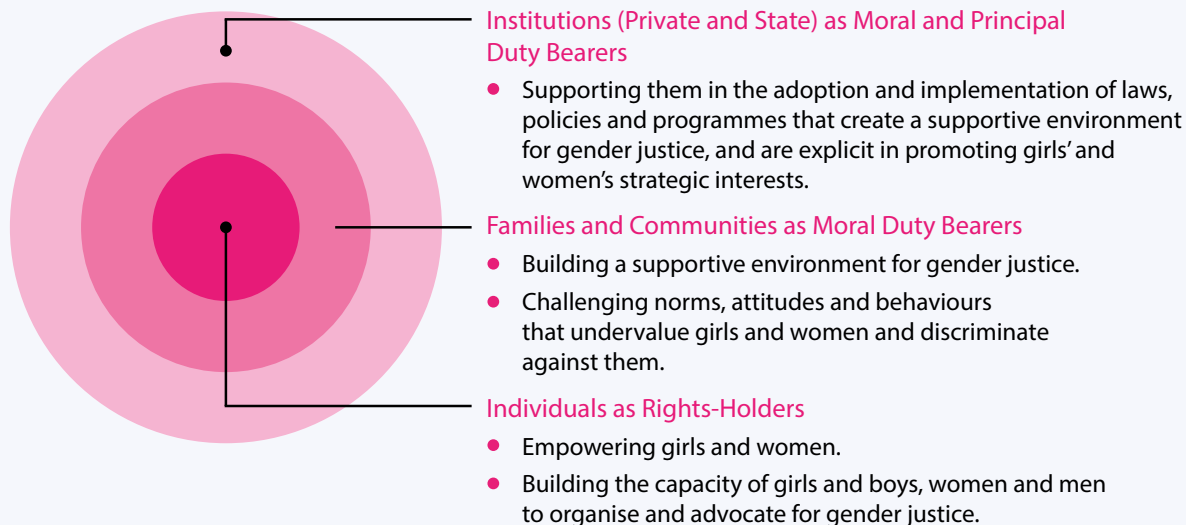
where families and communities value girls and believe in their potential, and where institutions enact laws and policies that promote gender justice. In other words, girls' pathways to power are more fully realised in societies with higher levels of gender equality.

### Plan's programmes

With rights at the core, Plan's programmes on gender equality and girls' empowerment are committed to work holistically across three dimensions of change: at the level of the individual rights-holders (girls); the family and community that surround girls; and the overarching institutions which influence girls' lives. Power is central to this work across all three dimensions of change. We aim to challenge and reconstruct the way power operates within families and communities in terms of how girls are valued, and also within the law, policy and the institutions of the state and the market. Alongside this, we aim to build the power of girls through programmes that enhance the agency of girls – the ability to make decisions and act on them – and the capacity of girls to organise and advocate together.

One thing we have learnt over the years of working on gender equality is how difficult it can be to change attitudes. It is not possible for any one organisation to work in isolation and expect to bring about sustainable change. In our programmes we work closely not only with communities but with research partners and regional and national governments. Our focus on ending child marriage is a priority for Plan and exemplifies this multi-dimensional approach to girls' rights and empowerment.

### Areas of change





## 18+: Ending Child Marriage in Southern Africa

Child marriage is one of the most urgent human rights and development challenges of our time. Child marriage affects nearly 70 million girls in the world. About seven million child brides live in East and Southern Africa. Child marriage is a violation of girls' basic rights, and it profoundly and negatively affects the trajectory of their lives – curtailing their childhoods, limiting their educational and economic opportunities, subjecting them to early and high-risk pregnancies and social isolation, and increasing their vulnerability to violence. The consequences of child marriage do not stop at the individual level. Child marriage perpetuates poverty and gender inequality into the next generation, affecting families, communities and nations.

There is an increasing global awareness of child, early and forced marriage and its impact on girls' human rights and development outcomes. There is also evidence of a growing desire by governments, civil society and the private sector to put in place targeted policies and financial resources to prevent child, early and forced marriage, and mitigate its harmful effects for girls and their families.

And yet, organisations and governments across the world are grappling with how to effect positive and sustainable change towards ending child marriage. Plan is no exception. To deal with this, Plan has drawn on the best available evidence, from within our own organisation, and also from our external partners, in order to develop a theory of change and programme model on child marriage that holds great promise for potential social transformation.

Plan International and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) have collaborated to develop **18+: Ending Child Marriage in Southern Africa**, Plan's sub-regional programme that aims to reduce and ultimately eradicate child marriages in four participating countries of Southern Africa: **Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe**.



The drivers of child marriage in the Southern Africa region are complex and interrelated. They include social, economic, cultural and religious factors that influence norms and behaviours at the individual, community and societal levels. Despite the extent of the practice, and the complexity of the causes, child marriage *can* be prevented through effective programme, legal and policy interventions.

### Programme approach

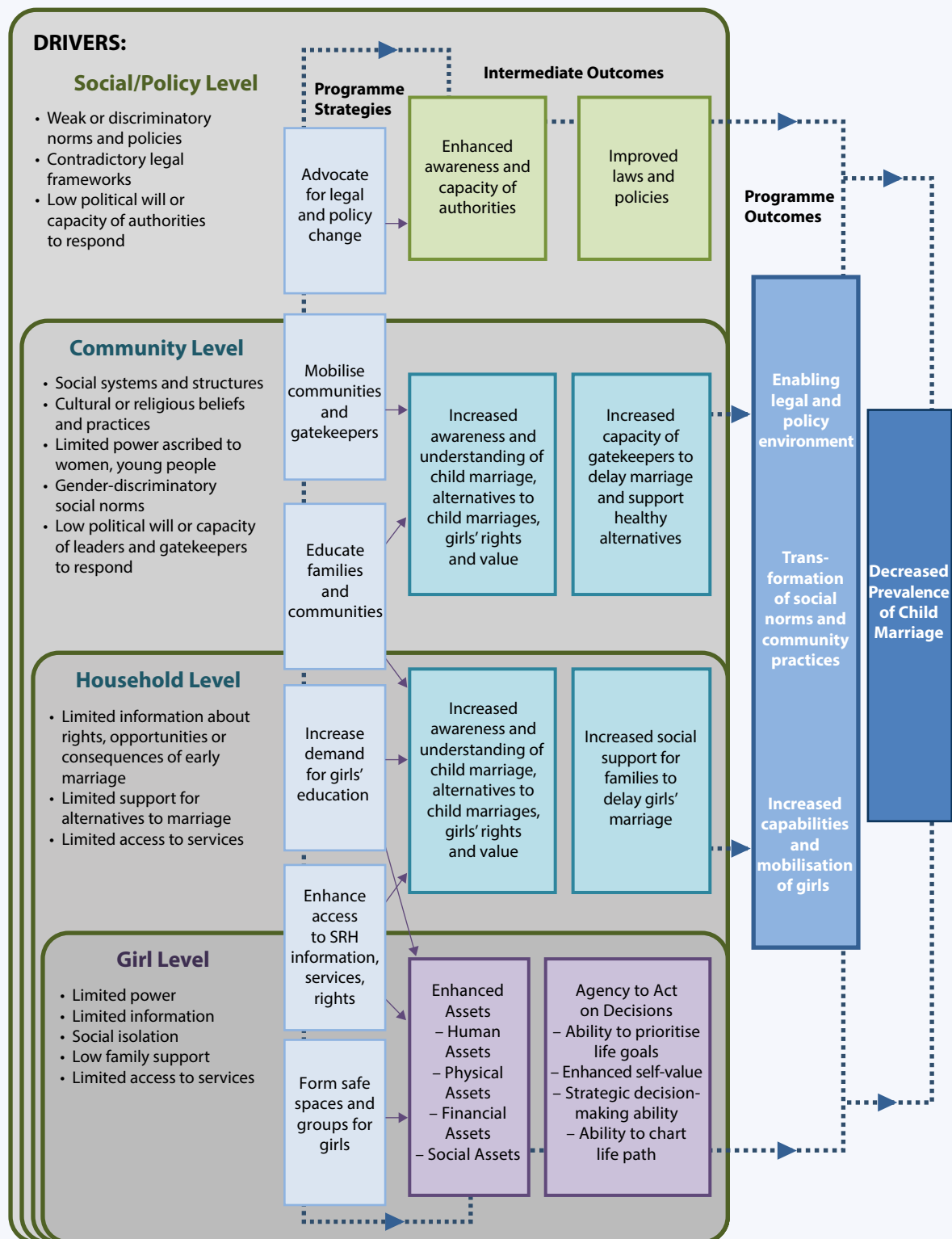
In developing the 18+ programme, ICRW and Plan had several principles and priorities in mind. First and foremost, the goal of the programme is to *prevent child marriage*. Second, the approach is designed to be *innovative* and *evidence-based*. We base the approach on what is known about the key drivers of child marriage in Southern Africa and what is known about best practice on child marriage prevention.

Next, the approach is intended to address *multiple levels*. The many drivers of child marriage must be addressed together if norms and behaviours around child marriage are to be effectively challenged and changed. A multi-level programme includes activities that work directly with girls to enhance their power to act as agents of change in their own lives, as well as with families and communities, both to help construct supportive environments and enhance opportunities for change, and to promote more gender-equitable norms that are reflected within community practices, as well as laws and policies.

Plan aims to promote a mutually reinforcing process of change, where child marriage becomes a less acceptable pathway for girls. We are using a 'systems approach' that invests in girls, in norm change, in advocacy for legal and policy change and in positioning child marriage in the development agenda.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the approach is designed to be *girl-centred*. Putting girls at the centre of child marriage prevention efforts is a matter of justice, because girls are disproportionately affected by child marriage.

The 18+ Ending Child Marriage in Southern Africa programme will build on and significantly extend existing efforts to combat child marriage. It will do so by systematically incorporating strategies that have been identified as being successful in delaying or preventing child marriage in multiple settings. Through intentional monitoring and research, Plan and ICRW will aim to understand and share information about a programme on girls' empowerment that can challenge and change how power operates across the multiple dimensions of girls' lives.

## 18+: Theory of change







# Translating ambition into action

# 6

*"Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance."*

Kofi Annan<sup>1</sup>

In the preceding chapters of this report we have asked: is it possible for girls to be truly empowered, and for gender equality to be achieved? What will this mean for how power operates across the institutions in society, which shape girls' lives? How can we accelerate transformative change so that it is sustainable for the next generation of young women?

Girls' pathways to equality – their ability to exercise power over their lives – are only sustainable when accompanied by simultaneous change across all the institutions that surround them: the social institutions where norms, attitudes and behaviours are reproduced within the family and community; the legal, political and public institutions of the state; and the economic institutions and the world of work.

This requires a process of radical social transformation: "Action is necessary at all levels, by a broad array of actors – not only the state. As decades of struggle in the women's movement have shown, such attitudes cannot be legislated away, or

erased by enlightened policy alone; rather, they require continuous movement of social actors operating at different levels and by different means."<sup>2</sup> Advancing gender justice requires improving both the condition and position of girls and women, changing how they are valued in society, to transform unequal gender power relations.

Research for this report<sup>3</sup> indicates that working locally with key power holders, identifying women leaders and active women's groups, supporting girls' leadership, participation and education, is key to the transformative change that will give girls choice, freedom from violence, access to education, decent work and the ability to make decisions about their own lives. The researchers are clear that while the key barriers to girls' and women's access to power and decision-making are socio-cultural, the "principal solution lies in the political dimension".

Therefore, while by no means the whole solution, government action remains critical. For this reason, this chapter sets out three key recommendations to translate ambition into action. To support these recommendations, we also look at some practical steps governments, as well as institutional donors and civil society, can take to develop an environment where gender equality can be realised.

Building an enabling environment is a complex, long-term and multi-dimensional process. It must be based on strengthening the capacity of girls and young women to act collectively; on engaging men and boys in the struggle for equality; and on strong public policies that protect and uphold the human rights of women and girls, including their right to freedom from violence and discrimination. Transformative change is possible. Political leadership, backed up by dedicated resources, has played, and will continue to play, a fundamental role in seeing this aspiration become a reality.

## Action plan

**Recommendation 1: Gender equality and adolescent girls in the post-2015 agenda**

**Recommendation 2: Accountability to women and girls**

**Recommendation 3: Intensify efforts on gender-based violence**

### Recommendation 1: Gender equality and adolescent girls in the post-2015 agenda

The global community, including UN member states, UN bodies, multilaterals and governments must:

- **Commit to actively supporting a post-2015 framework that includes a transformative stand-alone goal on gender equality, the full realisation of women's and girls' human rights, and the empowerment of women and girls.**

This must be supported by the strategic integration of gender equality across all

other goals and targets, in order to address the persistent structural drivers of gender inequality.

- **Ensure the rights and needs of adolescent girls are explicitly reflected in the post-2015 framework.**

The unique challenges facing adolescent girls are strikingly overlooked in much international development policy and practice. Adolescent girls must be a focus in the new post-2015 framework, with targets and indicators that specifically address the key issues facing their lives.



## Rationale

2015 is a landmark year. It marks the 20th anniversary of the Beijing World Conference on Women, and ending the period when the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should be met. Despite some hard-won gains towards gender equality in the past decades, girls and women across the world continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty, injustice, violence and discrimination, including in law. The debate on the post-2015 agenda provides an important opportunity to put gender equality at the heart of efforts to address poverty and inequality. The experience of the MDGs has shown that progress on sustainable development and on tackling poverty is not possible without addressing the structural, institutional and social barriers that prevent women and girls from exercising power over their own lives.

Plan believes that adolescent girls were a neglected group within the existing MDGs, and given the particular constraints faced by adolescent girls at a critical time of their life, they must receive increased and explicit attention in the new post-2015 agenda. The post-2015 framework provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reaffirm and advance commitments to achieve human rights and sustainable development for all. It must be grounded in existing international human rights frameworks and commitments to gender equality. A truly transformative approach, one that empowers women and girls in all contexts throughout their lives, and that addresses the major underlying and structural causes of poverty and inequality, will be crucial to any success of the post-2015 agenda.

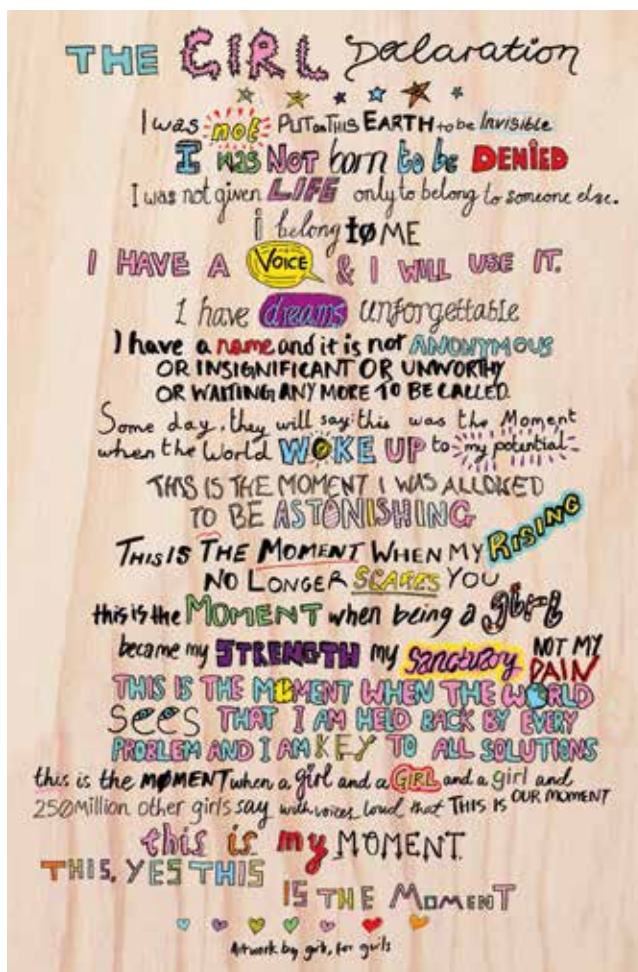
## THE WAY FORWARD

Plan, together with key global partners, have put forward the following indicative goals and targets to be included in the post-2015 framework:

**Gender goal:** Attain gender equality, achieve women and girls' human rights, and empower women and girls everywhere.

- **Target 1:** By 2030, end all forms of discrimination against women and girls.
- **Target 2:** By 2030, eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spaces, in all settings.
- **Target 3:** By 2030, eliminate all harmful practices against women and

## The Girl Declaration<sup>4</sup>



girls, including child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

- **Target 4:** By 2030, ensure full, equal and effective economic, social and political participation and leadership of women and girls at all levels of decision-making in the public and private spheres.
- **Target 5:** By 2030, ensure universal sexual and reproductive health and rights, with a particular focus on adolescent girls.
- **Education goal:** All girls and boys complete a free, inclusive and quality primary and secondary education in a safe and supportive learning environment, with opportunities for life-long learning.



## Recommendation 2: Accountability to women and girls

The global community, including UN member states, UN bodies, national governments, multilaterals and donors, must increase accountability to girls and women by strengthening data collection methods and practices. This includes a commitment to:

- **Increase data quality and raise standards on data collection.** Ensure that quantitative and qualitative data, disaggregated by sex, age, location, wealth quintile and disability, at a minimum, is used to capture nuanced and complex information, such as changes in attitudes of women and men and girls and boys, shifts in social norms, and the impact of women's and girls' participation in decision-making.
- **Establish a UN Commission on Information and Accountability for Gender Equality.** This would track progress on gender equality in the post-2015 agenda and, in so doing, renew global efforts to invest in the collection, processing, analysis and accessibility of comprehensive disaggregated national data. Such data is essential to monitor the impact of policy decisions and inform the proactive development of interventions focused on accelerating progress for girls and women. The Commission on Accountability should build on the successes and lessons learned from the UN Commission for Information and Accountability for Women and Children's Health. It should also incorporate participatory monitoring frameworks that are open and accessible to women and girls, in order to track progress, increase accountability, and reach the most vulnerable and excluded girls and women.
- **Invest in rigorous evaluations of interventions that work,** particularly around social norm change, collective agency, gender-based violence, and multi-sectoral programmes on gender equality. This is a core part of data collection, and policy-based research is needed to expand the evidence of interventions that show promise in terms of innovation, results, and scale-ability.
- **Undertake a review of sector plans and budgets,** including education sector plans,

to ensure that legislation, policies and programmes are gender-sensitive and promote equality, non-discrimination and human rights. Identify the steps necessary to implement the findings, and attach adequate resources, to ensure they are promoting international agreed frameworks and effectively delivering progress. It is critical for gender-response budgeting to focus on allocations beyond health and education ministries – to ensure that government budgets address the specific rights and needs of girls and women.

## Rationale

Timely, reliable and accessible data is the foundation for evidence-based policy and a key lever for sustainable change. To date, the lack of focus and investment in data that is disaggregated – by sex, age, location, wealth quintile and disability – has hindered our capacity to develop effective policy, measure our progress, and ultimately be accountable to women and girls themselves. There has been very low uptake of the 2013 UN Statistics Division gender indicators which had received broad-based government agreement.<sup>5</sup> Better data from across a broad range of indicators, and new measures to collect this data, are acutely needed. Measurement begets momentum: investment into nationally representative data on gender equality that is comparable across countries is key to tangible global progress.

To achieve our post-2015 goals on gender equality, it is critical for policy makers, donors, NGOs and communities themselves to have an accurate picture of where and how inequality persists so that we can target our interventions effectively. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods, and applying a gender analysis to this data, will provide the best way to track the progress of goals on gender equality, women and girls' human rights, and the empowerment of women and girls.

## PROMISING PRACTICE: Data2X<sup>6</sup>

In 2012, Data2X was launched by the UN Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the US government as a solution to address gaps in global gender equality data.

Data2X aims to advance gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment through improved data collection and analysis that can guide policy, better leverage investments and inform global development agendas. In so doing, Data2X aims to advance global economic and social gains on gender equality.

The first step for Data2X has been to map current gender gaps. To date, 26 gender equality data gaps across five domains (health, education, economic opportunities, political participation, and human security) have been identified according to need, coverage and policy relevance. Primary data gaps so far include violence against women and girls, sexual and reproductive health, access to land, and voice (political participation). Data2X has identified strategic ways to address these global data gaps. In fact, efforts are already underway to fill some of the gaps. For instance, more than 70 countries have conducted studies specifically to measure the prevalence and nature of various forms of violence against women and girls.

Building on these efforts, Data2X is now developing a Gender Data Blueprint to be launched in 2014 that will identify actionable gender data gaps, articulate actions required to fill these data gaps, advocate for data partnerships, highlight key partnerships, and call for commitments from national governments and institutions to support these partnerships. The Blueprint is intended to spur action and motivate the global community to respond to the gender equality data gap that is hindering development efforts.

This type of initiative dedicated to the improvement of the quality and scope of global gender data must be brought to scale. The post-2015 agenda presents a critical juncture for ensuring that gender equality data can directly inform policy, investment decisions and development agendas. Data 2X is a promising practice of how public-private partnerships and innovative solutions can increase data quality, raise standards on data collection, and ultimately advance gender justice.

### **Recommendation 3: Intensify efforts on gender-based violence**

Governments, donors and civil society must intensify efforts to end violence against women and girls. In particular, commitment and investment are urgently required to:

- **Develop and implement integrated national action plans** focused on violence prevention, response, and the provision of appropriate services. Action plans should be gender-responsive, take into account the diversity of experiences and needs of marginalised girls and boys, and look specifically at the school context.<sup>7</sup> For those countries with existing action plans on gender-based violence, these must be fully resourced with the appropriate financing and investment to match strategic intention.
- **Take all necessary measures to prevent gender-based violence as an urgent priority.** This can be done by targeting multiple entry points; supporting and investing in public education campaigns at the local and national levels; and making full use of media, including social media, to challenge social norms which perpetuate gender-based violence and gender inequality.
- **Remove the barriers that prevent girls' and women's access to justice** by investing in one-stop centres for integrated medical care, psycho-social counselling and legal and other support. Around the world, the vast majority of women and girls who experience violence never seek help, access justice or report the violence to anyone.<sup>8</sup>
- **Invest in girls' transition to, and completion of, secondary education in a safe and supportive environment.** Women with some or completed secondary education have an 11 to 36-per-cent lower risk of violence, compared with those without education.<sup>9</sup>
- **Identify and support local power holders, both male and female, who champion the human rights of women and girls,** promote efforts to create community action plans, and make public declarations in support of gender equality. Fund work with traditional, religious and community leaders to challenge and change the harmful social norms driving child marriage and gender-based violence.

## Rationale

Gender-based violence is a worldwide phenomenon and millions of girls and women continue to suffer every day. It is one of the most egregious rights violations and the greatest barrier to girls' empowerment. In 2014, the media has drawn the world's attention to the brutality of violence inflicted on adolescent girls across countries, cultures and continents. The prevalence of intimate partner violence is ubiquitous: almost a third of women have experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, by an intimate partner.<sup>10</sup> Research from WHO suggests that nearly half of all sexual assaults are committed against girls younger than 16 years of age.<sup>11</sup> School-related gender-based violence is also widespread, with millions of girls and boys living in fear of being physically abused under the guise of discipline.<sup>12</sup> Child, early and forced marriage forces girls out of education and into a life with increased risk of violence: being married before age 18 increases the risk of violence by 22 per cent.<sup>13</sup> As a human rights violation of epidemic proportions, gender-based violence has substantive development costs, and hinders the progress of core development outcomes. Combating violence against women and girls must be integrated into core development priorities, including as a focus for the post-2015 agenda.

Preventing gender-based violence relies in part on changing norms and attitudes that perpetuate gender inequalities and sanction gender-based violence with impunity. Working at the community and household levels can bring about transformative change, but this is always a complex and long-term process, one that is critical to women's and girls' human rights. Engaging and mobilising parents and communities, including men and boys and community leaders, are essential steps in changing negative social norms and practices and preventing gender-based violence. Knowledge of the law can have a protective impact on girls and young women who are more able to seek redress and may also act as a deterrent to perpetrators of violence. Awareness of laws can be powerful in other ways: for instance, in eight countries, men who reported awareness of laws on violence against women were nearly 50 per cent more likely to prevent another man's act of violence against women or girls.<sup>14</sup>

## PROMISING PRACTICE:

### Plan El Salvador: Girls Promoting Reduction of Gender Violence<sup>15</sup>

Programmes which aim to prevent and respond to violence against girls must involve the wider community to address underlying harmful norms, and aim to intervene at different levels and for a long period of time. Launched in 2012, Plan El Salvador's project focuses on combating gender violence by building girls' empowerment and creating a validating and supportive environment for girls to talk about and report their experiences. The project is based in San Salvador and five districts surrounding the capital that have the highest incidence of violence and the highest need for intervention, according to Plan El Salvador's observation. By its close in 2015, the project aims to have directly involved 1,800 girls and 180 boys aged 10 to 18, specifically targeting girls in school, young mothers, and girls in hard-to-reach areas.

A baseline study consisting of focus groups with mothers, fathers and children from three communities, as well as quantitative surveys distributed to individual girls, steered the project's development. This study denoted a need to involve both males and community leaders, who are still the primary decision-makers in their communities. As a result, the aims of the project are achieved in part through training boys as peer supporters, and partnering with local and national institutions to raise awareness of girls' rights, as well as establishing peer-counselling groups and more safe spaces for girls.

One of the key strengths of the project is its focus on collective action; it has helped girls to access wider support networks, both as a way of strengthening their ability to advocate, but also to provide them with someone to turn to in the event that they experience violence. Plan El Salvador have also witnessed an increase in the number of boys campaigning against gender-based violence, and reporting it to the police and involving child protection mechanisms following their training.



## Towards transformative change

In the sections below we provide guidance to help national governments, international institutions, local authorities, and civil society organisations seeking to advance the gender equality agenda. This is based on programme experience and on research with communities, with young women and men, across the countries where Plan works. It is organised under four main headings:

- 1 **Attitudinal Change: social, family and community** – transforming the public and private spaces where social norms and behaviours become entrenched, and where gender inequality and power relations are reproduced.
- 2 **Political Action: the state, public policy and the law** – using international frameworks and national policies to reinforce and protect girls' rights.
- 3 **Economic Empowerment: equal opportunities, decent work and real choices** – education and employment that works for young women.
- 4 **Participation: engaging girls in collective action** – information, mobilisation and respect for rights.

### 1 Attitudinal Change: social, family and community

It is at the socio-cultural level that inequality is at its most potent. What happens, almost imperceptively, at home, at school, in the media images we see, and in the local leadership models around us, conditions the roles and responsibilities we undertake. Working at this level to bring about transformative change is crucial to addressing discrimination and achieving women and girls' human rights. Policy makers and

donors can and should do more at this level to identify and support promising initiatives that are making progress on the ground. It is critical for all stakeholders to recognise that boys and men, who often occupy positions of power in families and communities, can play a powerful role in challenging gender inequality. It is vital to engage them in dialogue and efforts to tackle discriminatory social norms, challenge gender inequality, and promote changes in attitudes and behaviours.



## 2 Political Action: the state, public policy and the law

Laws and policies can reinforce gender inequality and prevent girls from making choices and decisions about their lives, their health and wellbeing. Where legislation protects girls' and women's rights, it is not always enforced, and access to justice is made extremely difficult. Courts are often geographically distant, legal services are not equipped to deal with gender-based cases, and judicial processes can be expensive, intimidating or even hostile to women and girls. Laws regarding inheritance and property rights still often favour men over women, boys over girls. In many countries, customary and religious law exists alongside the formal justice system, and may condone harmful practices or reinforce gender inequality and the perceived lower status of women and girls.

Policy makers and stakeholders need to take action, drawing on evidence about what works and systematically tracking progress on the ground. This must start with undertaking a comprehensive legislative review to ensure that domestic legislation, whether in statutory, customary or religious law, is in full conformity with international human rights standards. It is then critical to focus on reforming discriminatory laws and follow through with concerted policies and public actions that include legal literacy programmes. Such programmes disseminate information about how laws address issues such as violence against women and girls or discrimination in access to property and inheritance. Knowledge of the law can have a protective impact on girls and young women, who are more able to seek redress, and may also act as a deterrent to perpetrators of violence.

## 3 Economic Empowerment: equal opportunities, decent work and real choices

Economic empowerment is crucial to promoting the autonomy and decision-making power of girls and young women. Access to paid work means increased status, and disposable income, which in turn enables them to have more control over their lives. It increases their choices, helps to postpone both marriage and pregnancy and gives young women greater confidence



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and capacity to leave abusive partners. For young women to have equal access to decent work, and not be pushed to the margins of the informal economy, they need a quality education, support with school-to-work transitions and opportunities for skills development. Education and training systems must link to the labour market and respond to structural changes in the economy and society. Economic empowerment also entails addressing the barriers that young women face in accessing decent and productive employment – such as the burden of unpaid domestic and care work – ensuring safe and decent working conditions, equal pay, and protection against discrimination and exploitation in the workplace.

To achieve this, it is critical for national governments, NGOs and public and private sector employees to implement the International Labour Organisation's Decent Work Agenda of creating jobs, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection and promoting social dialogue involving strong and independent workers' and employers' associations.<sup>16</sup> Legislation on equal pay and equal opportunities, including on maternity and paternity leave, must be in place and enforced, alongside legislation against sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. Programmes are needed to ensure that young women are aware of their economic and labour rights and of existing mechanisms of redress.

*IT graduates working at a design company in Vietnam.*

#### PROMISING PRACTICE: Mama Cash<sup>17</sup>

Mama Cash was the first women's fund in the world and has been running since 1983, supporting around 100 organisations, networks and women's funds each year. It is one of the largest funders of small women's organisations and funds throughout the world, ensuring that it funds and supports women's rights initiatives that challenge the root causes of injustice and embraces organisations using activism for a collective political agenda. Mama Cash is innovative in its capacity to respond to the needs of individual organisations and provides core funding in the form of general support grants that enable gender-focused organisations to cover their overheads and pay their staff. With local expertise, Mama Cash is able to provide support in the environment in which the grantees and potential grantees are working, enabling Mama Cash to reach out to newer organisations and provide funding that is flexible enough to meet their needs.

#### 4 Participation: engaging girls in collective action

Through collective action and alliances, girls and young women have managed to bring about changes in both policy and practice, building real empowerment. For example, in many countries, both North and South, there has been a revival of activism with young women and girls leading and joining different social movements to bring about change, and putting the issues of gender and social justice onto the international agenda. Girls' and young women's contributions are becoming more visible in these movements and they are creating their own successful campaigns. This collective agency and action to promote gender equality and human rights should be supported through the creation of enabling environments, which respect civil and political rights, and which protect those who speak out to defend the rights of women and girls. Enhancing skills and knowledge, as well as reducing social and economic isolation, can empower girls to act and advocate for themselves and on behalf of others.

It is critical for national governments, international NGOs and donors to fund women's organisations and young activist groups campaigning for legal and policy change in support of gender equality, particularly those working with girls at the local level. Support should be provided to long-term projects that promote gender equality, with long-term, stable, predictable and flexible funding for women's rights organisations and other community-based organisations dedicated to promoting gender equality and human rights. Funding is not enough: we must also involve girls in policy and decision-making and include them in monitoring and accountability mechanisms. This can be achieved by investing in safe spaces for girls; ensuring accessible

platforms for girls to participate in decision-making; and supporting them to participate meaningfully in the design, planning and implementation of public policies, governance structures and development programming at the local, national and international levels.

#### Conclusion

In a recent review, the UN Commission on the Status of Women, while acknowledging that there has been progress towards gender equality, stated that many inequalities – including persistent gender pay gaps, women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work, discriminatory attitudes, and gender gaps in completion of secondary education – still exist.<sup>18</sup> Girls continue to grow up as second-class citizens, and we are witnessing an international political climate that is at times seeking to undermine international commitments, rather than strengthen them.

The current debate around the post-2015 framework is a renewed opportunity to create sustainable change for adolescent girls. Tackling gender-based violence and being truly accountable to girls and young women will be crucial in making irreversible progress towards gender equality.

Discrimination against girls and women has been part of the structure of our society for generations. Girls' empowerment, and the transformative social change that this requires, is one of the greatest challenges of our generation. Girls' rights are human rights and it is time this became a reality in the lives of girls everywhere.

***"These changes have to happen quickly; if everyone in the community wants them, we have to tell the government about our problems, what is happening."***

Amanda, 13, Brazil<sup>19</sup>





# Because We are Girls

‘Real Choices, Real Lives’  
cohort study update



# REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES

The 'Real Choices, Real Lives' study, now in its eighth year, is following 142 girls living in nine countries around the world – Benin, Togo, Uganda, Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines, El Salvador, Brazil and the Dominican Republic. The study uses interviews and focus group discussions with relatives and community members to provide a detailed picture of the reality of the girls' lives. Born during 2006, the girls will turn eight this year.

The purpose of the 'Real Choices, Real Lives' study is to gain an in-depth understanding of attitudes towards gender within families and how these attitudes impact on girls through a longitudinal analysis of their everyday lives. This year we are looking at middle childhood, and at the relationships and opportunities that can either support girls during this stage of their development or place obstacles in their way.

The information from this small research study illustrates very clearly how gender roles are embedded in family life and internalised by children at a very young age. The social norms we discuss in Chapter 2 of the main body of the report come to life in the day-to-day experiences and attitudes documented by the researchers in their conversations both with the young girls and their families.

## Pathways to Power – the significance of middle childhood

The girls taking part in the study are approaching their eighth birthdays. This year, many of them were able, for the first time, to talk clearly about family life, their friends, their schools and their communities.

Our understanding of middle childhood, or pre-adolescence, a stage ranging from ages five to nine, is limited. Fewer international indicators are disaggregated for this stage than for early childhood or for adolescence.<sup>1</sup> We may know little about this age-group, but pre-adolescence is a critical phase in the life cycle of a girl. It is when she enrolls in primary school, when household chores become very much part of her daily routine, and when the people around her may begin to view her as a commodity and sexualise her identity. It is

*Girl with her mother, Cambodia*



also the period where positive experiences at school have the greatest chance to make an impact on a girl's social, intellectual and emotional development which will in turn help maximise her potential.<sup>2</sup>

This year's research into the world of middle childhood opens our eyes not only to the challenges *they* face but also to the opportunities we have to provide support for younger girls.

## 1 Developing power within

Middle childhood is recognised as a developmental watershed, a stage when children begin to emerge from the shadows of dependency on their immediate families and start taking their place in the wider world. It is the time when children "assume a distinct, lifetime character".<sup>3</sup> It is also a time of immense opportunity, as this is when girls' and boys' gender identities are largely defined. What we are seeing from the 'Real Choices, Real Lives' study is how this develops through girls' and boys' sense of self, their understanding of the world around them through play and their physical exposure to their community. By the age of eight, the gender identities of the girls taking part in the study, and the boys around them, are largely fully formed.

### Building girls' self-esteem

Self-esteem is defined as how individuals value themselves. It affects the development of identity, motivation and belief in one's ability to achieve. When a child has high self-esteem, she will also feel important



as an individual and important in relation to others.<sup>4</sup> Much of the literature on this topic describes how self-esteem relates to children's social development and how building the right social skills can increase their self-esteem.<sup>5</sup>

We can already see how some of the girls have a strong sense of their personal decision-making power and general wellbeing, and can express a clear sense of self-awareness, including risk awareness and aversion. A small number of the girls are demonstrating their willingness to take their place in the wider world. In Benin, Thea's mother explained how her daughter started school one year ago: "One day she followed her older brothers, on her own initiative, to school and was enrolled. She told the headmistress that she wanted to start school. Nobody decided for her; she went to register on her own."

*Girl with her friends, Dominican Republic*

### **Making sense of the world through play**

Middle childhood is also defined as the time "to make sense and make friends".<sup>6</sup>

During this stage of their development, children develop an awareness that "other



*Girl with her mother, Benin*

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people have minds, plans and desires of their own. They [children] have an avid appetite for learning the local social rules, whether of games, slang, style or behaviour."<sup>7</sup> They need to fit in.

It is clear from the time we spent with the girls this year that they are learning the rules of gendered play. Both girls and boys tend to spend a considerable amount of time understanding social groups and at this stage, play tends to divide sharply along gender lines, girls playing with girls, boys with boys.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, children tend to become more "keenly attuned to questions of fairness and justice and instantly notice those grabbing more than their [fair] share."<sup>9</sup>



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### **REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Kabeer's research on empowerment is key to our work with the girls taking part in the study.<sup>10</sup> The three inter-related components of Kabeer's empowerment theory – access to resources, the role of agency and a sense of achievement – are central to our analysis. The study considers the importance of a life-cycle approach, building each year on the experiences of girls as they grow. We also draw specific attention to the importance of power in determining who can or cannot exercise their rights. These power dynamics impact on a girl's opportunity to choose the life she wants to live and can provide a powerful lens through which to examine and understand her present life and her future chances. The cohort study's data is analysed according to a set of interconnected and cross-cutting themes: the impact of poverty, intergenerational dynamics, attitudes and gender analysis.<sup>11</sup> These themes are grounded in Sen's capability theory on developing people's capabilities to help themselves and influence the world around them.<sup>12</sup>

Girl with her friends and family, Uganda



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Most of the girls talk about play with a clear sense of gender awareness. The transcripts are littered with unprompted references as to how their play is organised. For example, Namazzi from Uganda told our researchers how her favourite games are *"only for girls... We make dolls and sometime we play a game of cooking food using small tins"*. Amanda in Brazil explained: *"I don't want boys as friends, just girls,"* adding, *"I don't have any friends who are boys; only girls, because my mother doesn't let me play with boys."* Amelia from Uganda concurred: *"Mum refused me to play with them [boys] because they like fighting,"* she revealed. And according to Barbara in Benin, *"I play only with girls. We pretend to be young mothers by playing with dolls. The boys play football separately."* When we pressed the girls further about their favourite games or activities, most of those mentioned related to the gender roles they see around them every day. Bianca, from Brazil, said: *"My favourite pastime is playing with my dolls. When I*

Girl with her sister, Brazil



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*don't have anyone to play with me, I play alone. Playing with dolls is much better than playing Police and Thieves."*

Their understanding that there is a difference between how girls and boys spend their time is becoming clear. In Brazil, Sofia told our researchers that she resents the fact that her brother does not have the same household obligations and spends all of his free time playing. The fear of being ostracised by those around them is the main reason girls tend not to challenge established norms<sup>13</sup>, but we can see that, from quite an early age, some girls are certainly capable of questioning and criticising both the norms and their own situation. Patricia from Brazil has strong opinions: *"I think men and women can do the same activities in the same way. My dad doesn't help my mother. I think my father could help my mother."*

We can also see from our research how society's expectations – reinforced daily through play and other social interactions – can become entrenched and accepted by the time girls reach adolescence. Other studies show how, as 'good daughters', girls are expected to be submissive, docile and shy, and not to be outspoken, opinionated or mischievous.<sup>14</sup> Our research this year with adolescent girls and young women in the cohort communities reveals similar expectations from parents.<sup>15</sup> It is humility and deference that are valued, as 20-year-old Mary reveals: *"I must be patient in what I am doing, I must respect everybody in the community, I must show love to my parents such that they can pay my school fees."*

This exchange between Tan and our researcher in Vietnam demonstrates some of these attitudes emerging with the younger girls:

**Tan:** *I rarely play with male friends in my class because it is graceless if I play with boys. Girls should play with girls and boys play with boys.*

**Researcher:** Boys should not play with dolls? Why not?

**Tan:** *Because it looks strange.*

**Researcher:** Is it OK for a girl to want to play rough sports like football?

**Tan:** *Yes, but they should not kick the ball too strongly, otherwise it will hit the leg or face.*

Girl with her mother, Vietnam



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As the girls taking part in the study grow, the gradual expansion of their physical abilities and horizons through play is a real opportunity to build both skills and confidence. There is convincing evidence about the importance of sport as a way for adolescent girls to feel secure in themselves and in their own bodies.<sup>16</sup> And the years from age five to nine are when this confidence is built. This year, more girls in the 'Real Choices, Real Lives' study reported enjoying sports and physically active play, alongside less physical activities such as reading, playing with dolls and imaginative play.

### Mobility and movement

Middle childhood is also the period when children tend to spend increasing amounts of time away from their immediate family; attending school for more hours in the day, playing outside of the home and developing a better understanding of their environment. Over the past two years, the girls in our cohort have spoken increasingly about the sense of freedom they feel when they play outside of their homes, in spaces such as friends' houses, empty lots, roadsides and even abandoned rice fields. Compared to when they were younger, the girls now have considerably more freedom of movement. However, compared to their male peers, it is clear that most of the girls are restricted. Hillary in El Salvador explained: *"Where they don't let me go is to visit a woman named Elsa; she lives too far away. Miguel can go, but I can't because I'm a girl."* Placing physical limitations on girls at a time when they are

developmentally most curious about their surroundings limits not only their physical but also their psychological horizons.<sup>17</sup>

Davy in Cambodia gave an example that clearly demonstrates how limiting attitudes can develop from a young age. Her brother spends his time chopping firewood, carrying water, playing and herding the buffalos. The tasks for Davy and other girls in her community include washing dishes, cleaning the pots and pans, cooking rice and building the cooking fire. She felt that *"the task of chopping firewood is the task of the man. If the girls do it, we are afraid of cutting our hands or feet."*

This exchange between Jocelyn and our researcher in the Philippines further demonstrates this point:

**Researcher:** What is the game boys play? What is their game?

**Jocelyn:** *Football!*

**Researcher:** What other games?

**Jocelyn:** *Sabay-sabayo!*

**Researcher:** Do the boys also play with the girls?

**Jocelyn:** *No, only boys!*

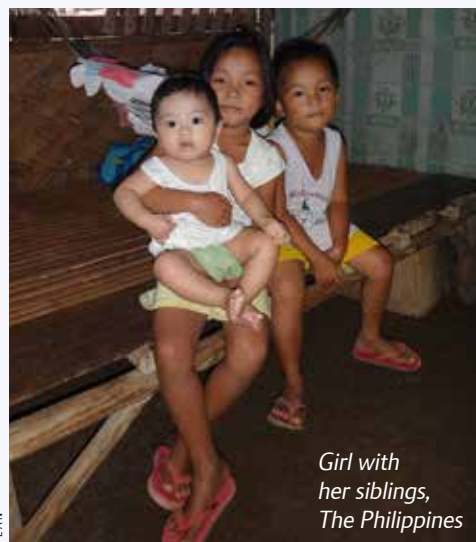
**Researcher:** Ah, boys only... so you're not included?

**Jocelyn:** *We're not included!*

**Researcher:** Why don't they let you join in?

**Jocelyn:** *Because we are weak.*

What is clear is that the nature of mobility and play not only reinforces gender stereotypes but, critically, encourages girls' limiting perceptions about themselves.



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Girl with her siblings, The Philippines



Girl with her brothers, Dominican Republic



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## 2 Part of the learning process

As the years go by, parental expectations grow and new responsibilities are given to the girls. These responsibilities are almost exclusively confined to the domestic space. The impact of time spent on domestic chores – keeping girls away from school work and play – is well documented. Less well understood is exactly how the attitudes that drive gendered division of labour in the home are reproduced and how they can become so deeply entrenched before girls enter adolescence. From an early age, many of the girls in the study have been actively encouraged to imitate the work of their mothers and grandmothers. When they were younger, they engaged in play focused around domestic tasks; now, as they grow older, they are given increased responsibility for real household chores. We can see how, particularly in middle childhood, girls (and boys) receive “systematic training in ‘how to be’ each of our social identities throughout our lives”.<sup>18</sup> There is evidence that girls, in particular, manage their behaviour in adolescence in relation to informal social control, driven

by expectations about how they should behave.<sup>19</sup> For this reason, it is critical to understand the social norms at play prior to adolescence that can influence girls’ decisions, actions and behaviour so powerfully.

### A curriculum of chores<sup>20</sup>

Our discussions with the girls’ parents and grandparents revealed how a ‘curriculum of chores’ encourages girls not only to take on and own domestic responsibilities, but eventually to become actively engaged in reproducing these social norms themselves. The life-cycle approach of the ‘Real Choices, Real Lives’ study has enabled us to understand this relationship more clearly. Valerie’s mother from the Dominican Republic wants her daughter “to learn to have responsibilities and to be committed to the house”. In Togo, Melyah’s mother said that while Melyah is currently considered too small for household chores, “we teach her to wash dishes and sweep as a preparation for the future. In our families [in our community], the small girls have to learn to do certain things from a young age. It is part of the learning process.”

Ala-Woni's mother added: "As much as she grows, there will be certain duties that could be given her." And Isoka's mother concluded: "Normally, the women do [the housework] with their daughters. Older girls are often supporting, some from age 12 upwards."

A critical step in ensuring that these ideas are reinforced is the addition of the task of caring for younger siblings. By middle childhood, this has become a significant part of many of the girls' responsibilities, an important role that the girls are expected to 'own'. Sharina from the Dominican Republic explained how she now unquestioningly takes on the role of caring for her younger brother:

**"Girls don't play with cars because they are not male, and boys should not play with dolls or with [kitchen] toys. My younger brothers cannot do chores at home, only we girls. If my little brother dirties his clothes I wash them."** Thearika's mother, in Cambodia, told us just how involved her daughter is in the care of her younger sibling: "She wakes up at 6am, cleans her teeth, takes a bath by herself. She helps to take care of my small baby and then has breakfast before she walks to school. It's about 10 minutes away. In the afternoon, she looks after her brother when he is sleeping, for around three hours." In Brazil, Sofia is responsible for washing dishes,

Girl at home, Dominican Republic



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Girl washing clothes with her family, Uganda



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sweeping the floor and looking after her 16-month-old brother when she returns home from school.

### So what about everybody else?

The real challenge is that the attitudes and behaviour of the girls' parents, siblings and other relatives is largely reflective of the social expectations in their communities. Although a small number of girls behave in ways that challenge expectations – in the Philippines, Chesa spoke of enjoying playing football with boys in her neighbourhood, and Maricel said she likes to climb trees, acknowledging that she is the only girl she knows who does so – when we looked at the attitudes of those around them, the vast majority of people hold on to patriarchal ideas about behaviour, roles and responsibilities. These tend to be rigidly set – the males of the household wield more power, and are considered more important, than the females.

Even when the girls' mothers acknowledge that it is unnecessary for roles to be so strictly defined, they are unable to challenge the status quo because their attitudes are unconscious and internalised. Raquel's mother in El Salvador explained that her husband "doesn't often help me. I don't like it when he does because he comes home to rest." In the Dominican Republic, Saïdy's grandmother explained that "men have the right to learn, men have the right to learn to cook, to wash clothes, to iron, to do it all in

case they are left on their own", reinforcing the idea that household work is 'women's work' to begin with. According to Larba's mother in Togo, "It's the same all over in our community, because the men and boys work hard on the farms. They therefore have to relax when they come back home. If, however, they are all at home, I can then give some work to the boy."

Saidy's grandmother explained her motivation for giving Saidy more domestic responsibility as she gets older. Despite her desire to support her granddaughter's education, Saidy is expected to be the woman of the house and to look after the men in her grandmother's absence. This is considered to be an appropriate role for Saidy, even though she is young: "She can learn, little by little, to do household chores. I get her to do it because sometimes I go to the capital. She and Saidy's grandfather stay on their own, unless a neighbour comes in. He doesn't know how to do anything. He can't clean the house, wash clothes or cook. I went to the capital and stayed for a month; when I got back it looked as if no human being lived here."

In Togo, Mangazia's mother illustrated how similar expectations are reinforced: "It's the same throughout our community. The man does nothing [in the house]. It is impossible to change or reverse the trend."

"Girls of her age do the same throughout the community," Ladi's mother added. "It is a way of helping them learn and prepare for the future."

*Girl with her family, Togo*



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*Girl with her friend, Dominican Republic*

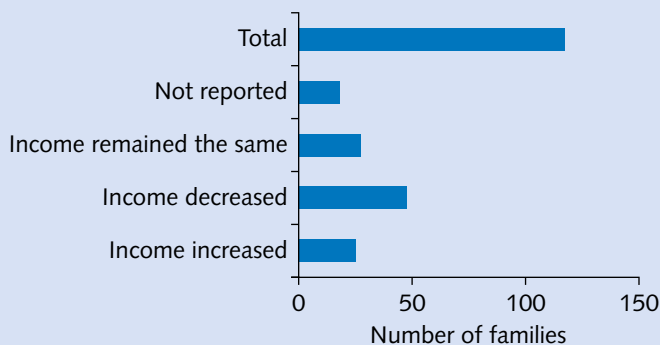
Not everyone is as resigned to the situation as Mangazia's mother; increasingly, there is a recognition that change is both possible and necessary. As the girls continue with their primary education, we are seeing a small but growing number of parents, mothers in particular, acknowledging the time burden of domestic chores on girls and its impact on their education. In the Dominican Republic, Nicol's mother is a dissenting voice: "I tell her that I will do [the domestic chores] while I can, so that she can dedicate her time to studying. I would change things so that girls of her age would not do it, only older women." And Saidy's grandmother, who earlier described a strict gender code around household work, has limited the amount of time Saidy spends on these tasks to between 15 and 30 minutes a day. In Togo, Djoumai's mother offers a solution: "It is possible to change, through sensitisation, dialogue and counselling for parents on sharing household chores."

### 3 The reality of poverty

The daily grind of poverty is a significant factor in the replication of patriarchal attitudes and behaviour.<sup>21</sup> Our understanding of intergenerational gender roles has helped to uncover how, in the economically fragile situations in which these families live, the capabilities, agency



## Changes in family income



and rights of women and girls can be restricted. The economic reality for many of the families is one of struggling to survive; with necessity and survival the drivers of daily life, the notion of rights becomes less significant. In El Salvador, Rebecca P's mother eloquently explained what she observes in her community, acknowledging the lack of opportunity also faced by men living in poverty and the impact this has on gender dynamics in the home. "In daily life, [women] don't get the same opportunity for rights. The man is able to do any job and a woman has to stay at home. Some men don't give [women] the opportunity to be what she wants, to fight for what she wants. Sometimes [men] don't have an opportunity either. This affects women because they are [then] oppressed by men."

*Girl with her family, Dominican Republic*

Last year, we reported on how the families taking part in the study make decisions and plan while living with the daily reality of



*Girl with her family, The Philippines*

financial and economic stress. For many of the families, the risks associated with climate change continue to affect growing seasons and harvests, and have a direct impact on family finances. Almost all of the families continue to report crop failures, increased local food prices and food shortages at various points in the year. The graph above shows how most families reported that their income has either decreased or remained the same. The only country where more families reported that their income has increased was the Philippines, where the families taking part in the study tend to have several income streams; for example, combining fishing and farming with petty trading and service delivery. This can be an important coping mechanism in uncertain times. In the Dominican Republic, on the other hand, families tend to have just one income stream, and are more reliant on family members for remittances and on the government's social protection allowance. Nine Dominican families in the study are now receiving this support, an indication of their vulnerability. This year, 20 families reported having some savings, while the majority have to borrow money in times of emergency; only six families have any form of insurance.

As the girls grow, we are observing an increasingly complex web of social networks supporting their mothers and fathers with their care. A small but growing number of girls (in 2012 it was eight girls; in 2013, 13 girls; and in 2014, 17 girls) are in the care of their grandmothers or grandparents, usually because the girls' mothers have migrated for work.

*Girl with her friend, The Philippines*



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#### 4 Going to school – an opportunity for equality

The right to a quality education is an important part of the story of girls' empowerment. Formal education is where they can understand and develop their own capabilities, and where they experience important elements of the journey towards empowerment: a sense of achievement, the role of agency and access to resources.<sup>22</sup> Attending school can be a significant early step for girls. The majority of the girls are now in their second year of primary school – 95 per cent of the girls are currently enrolled in primary school, but attendance is more problematic.

##### THE GIRLS BEING LEFT BEHIND

Fifty-five per cent of the girls are not attending school regularly, citing a number of different reasons, from ill health to poor weather conditions and the unaffordability of fees, lunch money and equipment. In some countries, this figure is worryingly high – in El Salvador 90 per cent of girls are missing school regularly. In Cambodia and Uganda, the figure is 83 per cent. Layla from Benin lives with her grandmother, who allows her to stay at home “when she wants to”. The school is 45 minutes' walk away. Layla is, in

fact, repeating the first year of primary school. Chantal from the Dominican Republic suffers from an umbilical hernia and has missed 20 days of school so far this year.

A small number of the girls are either still attending some form of pre-school (four girls) or are not enrolled in school at all. The largest proportion of girls who are either not enrolled in school or not attending regularly are from El Salvador (two girls are not in school and two are not attending regularly). Rebecca P's mother explained that Rebecca P has a speech problem so is not enrolled in school. Gladys' mother said that although Gladys attended school last year, she is now at home – her mother explained that she is very shy and was being bullied by other children. However, Gladys herself reported being locked in at school overnight. This incident appears to have had a significant impact on her and she is unwilling to go back. Her mother, however, insists that she will enrol Gladys again in time for the new school year.



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*Girl at home, Benin*

Girl at home,  
Brazil



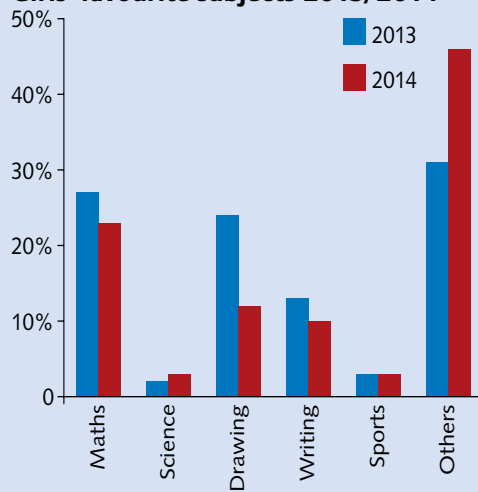
Over the past two years, attending primary school has provided an important opportunity for the majority of girls taking part in the study – and for the boys around them. For the first time, most of the girls are spending extended periods of time with boys on a daily basis. Critically, when girls attend school, their routines are reasonably similar to boys', whereas their lives tend to diverge sharply outside of school. Despite almost all the girls naming other girls as their closest companions, and some confirming that they are discouraged from playing with boys, the girls do interact with boys, particularly during lessons but also sometimes during break. Amanda in Brazil explains: *"At school, the boys don't ask to play basketball with us and don't go where we are playing... The only games I play with boys are the games [lessons] at school. Our teacher tells us to play cola [catch] with the boys."*

Some studies have shown how teacher-student interactions in classrooms can reinforce existing gender stereotypes, with boys being seen to provide "good responses and manifested ambition" and girls seen as "timid and not as hard-working as boys".<sup>23</sup> In our research, there is no clear evidence of this, and the girls have a positive attitude towards subjects like maths, an area in which girls tend to underperform later in their academic careers.<sup>24</sup> This year, the subject enjoyed most by the highest proportion (23 per cent) of girls is maths – down from 27 per cent in 2013 – followed by drawing, writing and science (see chart right). It appears that changes in

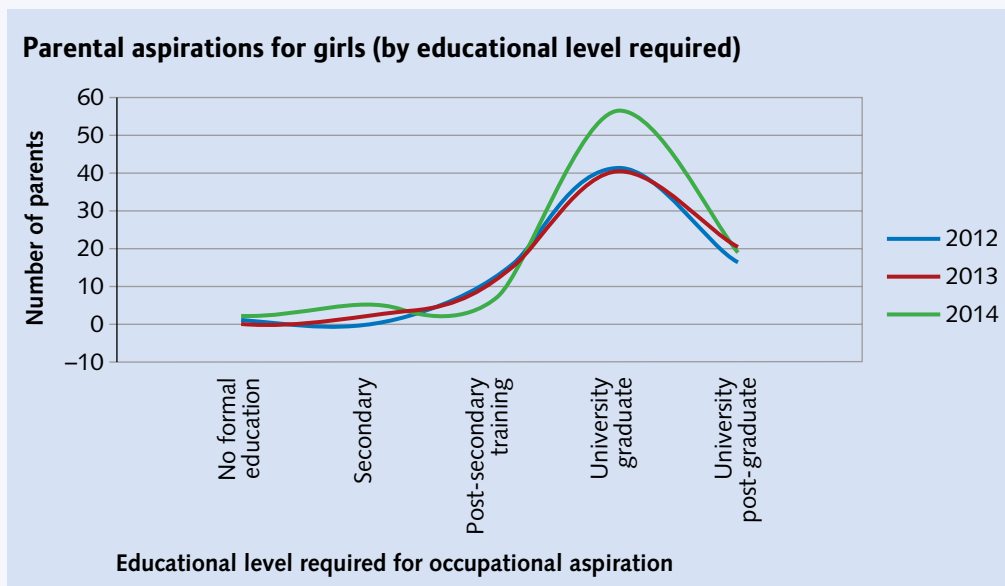
the girls' own expectations and performance occur over time, highlighting the importance of encouraging more gender sensitivity in the primary years of school and working to address the psychological basis of girls' perceptions of their potential.

A significant proportion of the girls – 68 per cent – report that they enjoy their time at school, describing it in a positive light; they look forward to going and enjoy what they learn. School is generally reported as a safe space by the girls, and many included the school playground, playing field or compound as their preferred spaces to play. In fact, several girls described the sense of freedom and happiness they get from being in school.

Girls' favourite subjects 2013/2014







*"I prefer going to school than staying at home,"* explains Mony in Cambodia, *"because at school I can learn and get knowledge and am happier than at home."* Layla in Benin added, *"I do sport with my friends. We play at home and at school. The school games are more interesting than the ones of home."* Andrea in El Salvador

explained that school is where she feels the best because that is where she meets up with her friends. At the same time, many girls reported that corporal punishment is a side of school life that they do not like. Gabriela in El Salvador explained how she feels: *"I like to go and I am learning to do everything. It's just that there are some children and they hit them with the ruler because they were noisy and everything while the teacher was teaching."*

As we have reported each year, the girls' parents have told us consistently about the high academic ambitions they have for their daughters. The graph (above) shows how these aspirations have risen over the past three years – it charts the education level required for the occupational ambition being expressed by the girls' parents. Their ambitions have remained high despite the significant challenge of limited access to secondary and post-secondary education facilities in their neighbourhoods and the poor quality of education available to most of the girls. In fact, a small but growing number of parents (those of eight girls in 2014; five in 2013) are choosing to send their daughters to private schools. Most of the girls in private schools are from Benin. This is an indication, not only of their concern about the government facilities available, but also of their commitment to their daughters' education.



Girl with her mother, Cambodia

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*Playing at home, The Philippines*

## 5 Conclusion: making the most of the opportunity of middle girlhood

Middle childhood is the stage in which the greatest potential to build *power within* lies – it is when children make significant developmental gains, and when they develop a strong sense of awareness of themselves in relation to others. It is also clear from this year's research that distinct gender roles are being reproduced in every aspect of the girls' lives. They see themselves as responsible for domestic work and as weaker than boys, and they are aware of the different expectations that their families have of them compared to their brothers. What girls are expected and allowed to do is already beginning to frame who they will grow up to be.

It is also clear that, although they may want to fit in with what is expected of them, girls are quite capable of questioning the situation they are in and the way roles and responsibilities are shared out. School emerges particularly as a place where change is possible – boys and girls do not live rigidly divided lives there and at eight years old our participants have learned that maths is not in fact just for boys. Their parents' educational

ambitions for them also remain high. These aspirations are beginning to lead mothers, in particular, to question the domestic load their daughters are expected to shoulder and to find ways to give them more time to study.

The research reveals the strength of the embedded social norms that exist, which many families are powerless to resist. But as we continue to track the girls' progress, it is encouraging to see that awareness of the constraints of gender norms is growing, not least amongst the girls themselves. It has given us a more focused insight into the detail of daily lives lived in poverty and a deeper understanding of the complexities and practicalities of achieving gender equality – not as words on paper but in real terms. Our analysis this year has helped us to understand better the kinds of interventions – in families, in schools and in communities – that are necessary for supporting girls during and beyond middle girlhood. These include keeping girls in school, sharing domestic work, and encouraging equal voice, status and opportunities, unencumbered by external expectations and by that small internal voice telling girls and boys what they should or shouldn't do – because girls can climb trees, and boys can play with dolls.

# Because We are Girls

'Real Choices, Real Lives' Cohort Study Map









## Section 3

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# Plan's Because I am a Girl campaign

Plan's 'Because I am a Girl' campaign will support four million girls to get the education, skills and support they need to move themselves from poverty to opportunity.

Globally, one in three girls is denied an education by the daily realities of poverty, discrimination and violence. Every day, young girls are taken out of school, forced into marriage and subjected to violence.

Not only is this unjust, it's also a huge waste of potential. Millions of adolescent girls are being denied their right to education at the time when it can transform their lives and the world around them.

Progress has been made in terms of increasing the number of girls enrolling in school, but the quality of the education that girls are receiving remains poor in many countries. A quality education is relevant to the needs, rights and aspirations of girls and boys.

Plan's experience over more than 75 years has shown that real change can take place when girls and their education are valued. Supporting girls' education is one of the single best investments we can make to help end poverty for everyone. Providing a girl with at least nine years of quality education means she is:

- less likely to experience violence, marry or have children while she is still a child herself;
- more likely to be literate, healthy and survive into adulthood, as are her children;
- more likely to reinvest her income back into her family, community and country;
- more likely to understand her rights and be a force for change.

The power of this is astonishing. It saves lives and transforms futures, releasing the incredible potential of girls and their communities.

We are working with girls, communities, traditional leaders, governments, global institutions and the private sector to

address the barriers that prevent girls from completing their education.

Plan's Because I am a Girl campaign is calling for:

**Goal 1:** Girls' education to be prioritised by world leaders.

**Goal 2:** Girls' completion of a quality secondary education to be a major focus of international action.

**Goal 3:** Funding for girls' education to be increased.

**Goal 4:** An end to child marriage.

**Goal 5:** An end to gender-based violence in and around schools.

**Goal 6:** Girls and boys to participate in decision-making and inspire those with power to take action.

The 'State of the World's Girls' annual reports provide, and will provide year after year, tangible proof of the inequalities which still exist between girls and boys, and will support the campaign with specific girl-oriented evidence. The report will give concrete recommendations for the campaign to take forward on ways to tackle gender inequality and ensure that every girl is able to realise her full potential.

Join in and take action at:

**[plan-international.org/girls](http://plan-international.org/girls)**



UN, July 12th  
2013.

# Introduction



*Campaigning in Uganda.*

PLAN/WILL BOASE

This section provides evidence to support the analysis of the 2014 report in the form of examples of promising programme practice, a legal analysis relating to gender-based violence, a glossary, references, and online resources relevant to gender equality.

- The **legal analysis** details existing international law and human rights legislation in relation to gender-based violence; looking at where laws have had the most impact.
- Our selection of '**Promising Practice**' case studies provides detailed examples of three projects in different parts of the

world which are helping to empower girls by challenging entrenched attitudes and institutional power, and encouraging girls' agency. The themes featured include governance, tackling gender-based violence, and supporting grassroots activism.

- The online resource section: '**Girls Online**' provides an extensive list of useful information on organisations, campaigns, research and databases.
- The **Glossary** includes detailed explanations of gender-related and technical terms.

# Tackling gender-based violence: a legal scan of promising anti-violence laws

By Tzili Mor

Legal Consultant, Human Rights and Gender

## Introduction

Laws are an essential first step to ground gender-based violence as crimes, to chip away at perpetrators' impunity, and to send powerful messages of disapproval and deterrence. Laws usually require broader attitudinal change by both legal actors and the public in order to be effective.

This overview seeks to identify, where feasible, examples of effective or promising features or implementation of laws that tackle acts that result or are "likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".<sup>1</sup>

- Scanning gender-based violence laws across the globe, it becomes apparent that even the most praiseworthy and well-intentioned laws have deficiencies – in resource allocation, political will, community acceptance – with gaps also in implementation and enforcement. Additionally, certain legal features of laws against violence against women (VAW) may be of use in some contexts but not in others.
- Determining the impact of laws is constrained by scant global and comparative impact studies; a dearth of longitudinal data on gender-based violence (GBV) incidence and process indicators (such as access to justice and rates of reporting, prosecution, conviction, scope of punishment); lack of consensus about which indicators best measure positive impact of anti-GBV laws, and concerns about claims of causality between a law and a particular desirable effect.

Accessing the impact of anti-GBV laws is a complex process:

- Most anti-GBV laws are relatively recent, with the bulk barely out of their teens, rendering authoritative longitudinal conclusions premature.
- New anti-GBV laws may result in greater incidence of reported violations which could be attributed

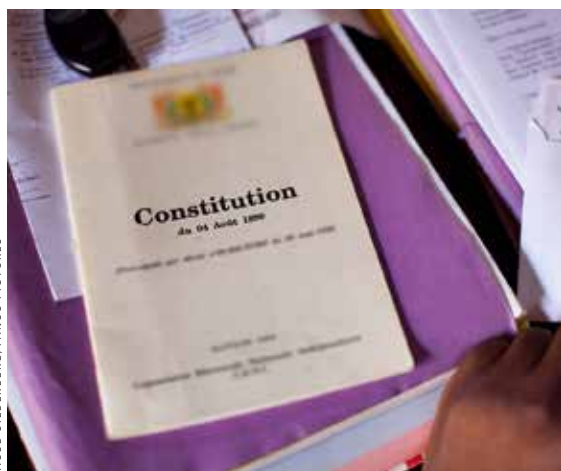
to a backlash or to increased awareness of the law – survivors may be newly able to access legal recourse and other services.

- Awareness-raising efforts about new anti-VAW laws may reduce stigma associated with gender-based violence and empower survivors to come forward and share their experiences.
- Increased reporting does not mean actual VAW rates spike after a law is passed. Overall, the passage of anti-domestic violence laws results in lower reported rates of intimate partner violence.
- It is near impossible to conclude that rates would not be higher without a law in place, even if reporting rates do not drop over time following the adoption of an anti-VAW law.
- Rates of reporting, prosecution, conviction, or attitude change about violence against women merely indicate a correlation. No true causality can be established between such rate fluctuation and the passage of anti-VAW laws.
  - Anti-VAW laws are only a part of a larger socio-legal puzzle of strategies for gender equality and empowerment. These must address inequities in laws and practices that may entrench gender violence by limiting choices for women who are, for example, in abusive family relationships and risk losing their homes, financial support and children if they seek legal remedies.



Based on the legal scan it is evident that the laws widely viewed as most effective employ a comprehensive approach, combining constitutional, civil, criminal and administrative laws to provide access to justice, redress, protection and compensation, as well as prevention strategies. Such laws mandate coordinated inter-agency and civil society response, stipulate for awareness-raising and training for professionals and service providers, incorporate robust community outreach, allocate resources for implementation, including provision of integrated support and advocacy services; and require collection of monitoring data, including evaluation of the impact of the laws to inform further revision.





## States bear legal duty to address violence against women

States' responsibility to address and eradicate gender-based violence, beyond being a moral imperative, stems from national, regional and international legal obligations. Underlying the landmark achievements of anti-VAW laws and the concurrent evolution of societal understanding of gender equality is a grid of international and regional human rights documents and national laws. People's conduct and, often, choices are governed by the laws, policies and practices of their communities. There is generally a hierarchy or rank order of the most to the least binding national, regional and international legal standards. While national constitutions usually represent the highest, or supreme, law of a nation, once states ratify an international treaty they agree to follow its principles.<sup>2</sup>

Current international law rejects any justification for violence against women and mandates states to comply with their obligations to prohibit, prevent, investigate, punish and ensure redress for survivors of GBV under any circumstances, whether at home or in public, by a spouse or a stranger. States bear a duty to refrain from interfering with the exercise of a right (respect); ensure others do not interfere with enjoyment of the right (protect); and promote and facilitate access to rights, including by adopting laws and providing for recourse and remedies (fulfil).<sup>3</sup> In other words, states must exercise 'due diligence': to prevent, investigate and punish violations of human rights such as acts of gender-based violence, including by non-state actors. Such duty applies whether the state is involved in armed conflict, under a state of emergency, political strife, or recovering from a natural disaster or humanitarian crisis.<sup>4</sup>

## The law in practice: promising legal approaches to eradicating violence against women and girls

Prompted by international and regional standards, states have been taking affirmative steps to prevent, investigate and punish violence against women, whether it is committed at home, school, in the street or the field, by state agents or private individuals, including relatives and teachers. Over the past decade, international and regional bodies have stressed the importance of developing sound legal tools to combat VAW.

The UN Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women recommends legal frameworks which include:

- Comprehensive and multi-disciplinary legislation.
- Main forms of violence, including physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence, defined and criminalised.
- Integrated interventions related to prevention, protection, support and care for survivors.
- Adequate penalties for perpetrators and remedies for victims.<sup>5</sup>

Inspired and informed by international standards-setting, the vast majority of countries have passed either general anti-GBV laws or legislated against specific forms of violence against women. In 2006, only 89 countries had legislation that specifically addressed domestic violence.<sup>6</sup> Today, over 125 countries outlaw domestic violence, and marital rape is explicitly prohibited in at least 52 countries.<sup>7</sup> Gender equality is guaranteed within 139 national constitutions, paving the path for a host of operational rights; 117 countries have outlawed sexual harassment in the workplace.<sup>8</sup> Growing numbers of anti-GBV laws, including stalking and cyber harassment laws, explicitly protect against discrimination on grounds of gender identity or sexual orientation.

Anti-VAW laws enable women to claim justice and redress, send a powerful message that violence against women, whether at home or on the street, is unacceptable, and catalyse attitude change. A 2011 UN Women study on justice for women found that where there are laws in place on domestic violence, rates of intimate partner violence are lower and fewer people think that violence against women is justified.<sup>9</sup>

In a positive growing trend, anti-GBV laws situate such violence as a human rights violation, identify multiple and intersecting forms of violence and acknowledge 'culturally specific' forms of violence, while recognising common underlying drivers of patriarchy-fuelled violence that targets girls and



Police station  
in Kenya.

SVEN TORFINN/PANOS PICTURES

women and encompasses direct and indirect victims. They also stipulate multi-agency and intersectional responses. The human rights-based framing – as used in the **Philippines**, **Vietnam**, **Indonesia** and **Pakistan** – shifts the legal responsibility to the states for their actions or failure to uphold such human rights, while equipping lawyers and judges, with human rights treaties as interpretive guides, to resolve legislative conflicts and fill gaps in national laws.<sup>10</sup>

Comprehensive laws on violence against women generally provide a broad legislative framework and a menu of measures, including: awareness-raising programmes; establishing inter-agency coordination (often involving civil society and providers); linking survivors to services and shelters; and mandating training for legal, health and social services providers about gender violence. **Bolivia's** law bans political violence against women; in 2013 it identified 15 specific types of violence against women and increased some sentences from four to 30 years.<sup>11</sup> The **United States' Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)** solidified national commitment to eradicating VAW by providing multipronged legal responses. VAWA offers innovative legal tools, including procedural protections for victims and relief for battered immigrant women, as well as funding services and trainings – though it requires periodic budgetary reauthorisation.<sup>12</sup> The landmark 1994 law is credited with reducing domestic violence for adult women by 60 per cent, decreasing the number of intimate partner deaths by 34 per cent for women and 57 per cent for men and increasing rates of prosecution, conviction and sentencing for offenders.<sup>13</sup>

Effective anti-VAW laws contain specific enforcement directives and clear indicators to

track progress. Anti-VAW laws are often ambitious in scope and reach, yet at times lack specific guidance for the various agencies tasked with their implementation. Laws that assign specific duties for government bodies enable prompt implementation and better monitoring. **Namibia's** domestic violence law obliges the Inspector-General to clarify police officers' duties, tabulate statistics on domestic violence incidents, and to submit periodic reports to the overseeing minister. In **Lesotho**, the law on violence against women instructs health facilities to provide free medical care to rape victims.<sup>14</sup> **Guyana's** law specifically tasks the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security with conducting studies, public awareness and educational programmes and disseminating reports on domestic violence in the country.<sup>15</sup> **Albania's** law clearly assigns duties to the various ministries: the Ministry of Interior must set up special domestic violence police units and train officers to handle such cases; the Ministry of Health shall set up protocols for care and documentation of domestic violence cases in emergency rooms and community health centres; the Ministry of Justice must, inter alia, train bailiffs on their duty to serve protection orders promptly and monitor their implementation, as well as allocate a budget for free legal assistance for domestic violence victims.<sup>16</sup>

Implementing laws, especially anti-VAW laws that mandate provision of legal aid and social services, require robust and continuous funding. Governments committed to upholding their anti-VAW laws stipulate for dedicated funding from national budgets to be earmarked for implementation. The 2007 Domestic Violence Act in **Ghana** establishes a fund for basic material support and rehabilitation of victims and for building shelters in the regions and districts. In August 2007, the President of Brazil pledged \$590 million to implement the country's anti-VAW law, hailed as a leading example of "a substantial allocation for implementation of legislation".<sup>17</sup>

To track progress of implementation, anti-VAW laws should incorporate monitoring and impact evaluation in the law. Such recommended monitoring ranges from collection of basic data on GBV disaggregated by sex, gender, age, race, ethnicity and other relevant characteristics (to enable tailored responses), to sophisticated tracking of enforcement through tabulating the number of protection orders issued, denied, cancelled, violated or appealed. Policy makers and rights advocates could rely on such collected evidence and data both to evaluate existing implementation efforts and improve future efforts.

## **Enforcement: Access to justice and legal empowerment**

Legal frameworks, as part of robust rule-of-law systems, are critical to anchoring women's rights and fundamental to ending impunity for gender violence and creating avenues for redress, remedy, and justice. Women and girls who experience violence and abuse often express reluctance and, at times, inability to access protection and remedies from daunting legal processes, police officers and judges, who might dismiss their concerns or insult them. They may also fear stigma and community rejection if they report a crime or pursue a perpetrator, especially if he is a family member. Effective approaches tackle legal literacy about rights and options for protection and redress, address women's lack of financial resources to travel to often distant courts or pay court fees or for lawyers; and their busy schedules of caring or work that prevent time off to engage in lengthy court processes.

Legal empowerment strategies complemented by accessible, empathic, user-friendly entry points improve women's willingness and ability to seek justice. Three general successful strategies have enhanced women's access to justice, particularly in cases of gender violence: 1) the establishment of 'one stop shops' offering integrated services, 2) all-women special police units and courts, and 3) provision of free legal aid and court support. These mechanisms reduce the complexity, time and resources required to navigate daunting criminal justice systems for GBV survivors and bolster the likelihood that cases will be pursued and properly prosecuted, and result in convictions and adequate penalties.

### **1. One Stop Shops**

Survivors of abuse must often make multiple trips – to the police to report the crime, a designated hospital for a medical exam, and the court to submit papers – before their violation formally enters the legal system. They have to reach out separately to providers for any counselling or psychological support they might require. Given women's caring responsibilities and typically limited time and financial resources, such complex legal requirements generally deter the already low number of women who report gender-based violence. One Stop Shops allow women to bypass these multiple steps. They offer survivors critical integrated services and care from trained multi-disciplinary staff in the healthcare, social-work, police and legal professions. Conviction rates for cases handled by South Africa's

One Stop Shop Thuthuzela Care Centres reached 89 per cent, compared with a national average of seven per cent, while trial durations dropped to seven and a half months, down from the national average of two years.<sup>18</sup>

### **2. Specialised and All-Women Units**

While all law-enforcement personnel must be trained and incentivised to respond adequately to gender-violence survivors, the presence of women in law enforcement is correlated with increased reporting of sexual violence. According to a UN Women study, "data from 39 countries show that the presence of women police officers correlates positively with reporting of sexual assault".<sup>19</sup> More Liberian women came forward to report sexual violence after all-women Indian police units were dispatched to post-conflict Liberia.<sup>20</sup> Awareness about violence against women and levels of incident-reporting have increased in 13 Latin American countries that launched women's police stations.<sup>21</sup> Brazil sports 450 women's police stations (DEAM) nationwide, credited with raising awareness, increasing levels of reporting, and initiating legal proceedings in VAW cases. More than 70 per cent of women who utilised the stations felt welcome and reported receiving adequate guidance on the judicial process.<sup>22</sup>

Growing evidence suggests that the mere presence of trained women legal professionals has a positive impact on female victims and their readiness to approach the justice system to seek redress. As a result of **Afghanistan's** lingering gender segregation and the low representation of women in the legal profession as prosecutors, lawyers and judges, women have generally avoided reporting abuses against them. A UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan report concluded that the presence of women police officers "cannot be overstated [in situations of VAW in Afghanistan] where women prefer to talk to other women about matters pertaining to their personal lives".<sup>23</sup> Afghanistan's 2009 Elimination of Violence against Women Law is enforced by special VAW prosecution units staffed mostly by female staff based in at least seven provinces.<sup>24</sup> The Units are tasked with prosecuting the law's 22 gender-based violations, including abuse, harassment, beating, giving 'baad' (exchange of a woman as blood reparation), forced and underage marriage, and deprivation of property and inheritance. A 2013 study of the VAW units concluded that they are important entry points for women victims. Almost all respondents related that because the Units are female-headed, women even in remote districts felt encouraged to visit them in search of justice.<sup>25</sup> While



the number of prosecutions is difficult to assess, the Units witnessed growing numbers of women and girls coming forward to report crimes against them, despite initial official scepticism due to a belief that women in a conservative society would prefer to keep such abuse secret. A recent study described that "during its first year of operation, the VAW Unit in Kabul received 300 cases originating from 15 different provinces in Afghanistan. By June 2012, this number increased to 1,175."<sup>26</sup>

Specialised courts with trained staff can likewise improve women's access to justice in cases of violence, reduce secondary trauma for victims, and prevent future violence. Several countries set up specialised courts, including Brazil, Canada, Nepal, Spain, Uruguay, UK<sup>27</sup> and the US, where more than 200 such courts operate.<sup>28</sup> A statewide impact study of **New York's** 24 domestic violence courts (representing a third of all domestic courts in the United States) praised the courts for significantly reducing re-arrests (for repeat abuse) of offenders on domestic violence charges, slashing case processing time, and substantially increasing conviction rate and jail sentences among male defendants.<sup>29</sup> **Brazil's** Special Courts for Domestic Violence and Violence Against Women established by the 2006 violence against women law ended the previous practice of dealing with domestic violence cases in criminal mediation courts, where 90 per cent of cases ended at conciliation, often due to intimidation of judges by abusers.<sup>30</sup> The new specialised courts issue protection orders and mete out criminal sanctions to signify such crimes are not trivial or undeserving of penalty. Special Sexual Offences Courts in **South Africa** have reduced the trauma of appearing in court for survivors and increased conviction rates in rape and sexual violence cases to 70-95 per cent, compared to the average 10 per cent conviction rate in regular courts.<sup>31</sup> Trained staff prepare survivors for the court proceedings, and separate waiting areas and rooms with a CCTV link protect survivors from direct contact with abusers.<sup>32</sup>

Mobile 'travelling' courts bring the judicial process to women, especially those in remote areas unable to travel to a formal courthouse. **Somali** women in regional capitals found the mobile courts a welcome avenue for redress.<sup>33</sup> Special mobile courts in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** have reportedly adjudicated sexual violence cases effectively. In 2010, nine mobile courts issued multi-year prison sentences in 95 out of 115 rape cases handled in remote areas.<sup>34</sup> Whether mobile or stationary, such courts enhance staff expertise to handle sensitive cases, ensure victim protection and improve



JENNY MATTHEWS/PANOS PICTURES

access by consolidating processes into one judicial mechanism and bringing it closer to them.

Worldwide, women constitute a mere nine per cent of police officers and 27 per cent of judges, making any generalisations about the impact of their relatively recent presence difficult. Nonetheless, the growing body of evidence suggesting the positive effect of women in the justice system means that recruiting women to the justice and law sectors remains a critical strategy in the fight against gender violence.

### 3. Legal Aid

Without effective means of implementation, laws remain aspirational scraps of paper. Low literacy rates and general ignorance of the law often prevent women from claiming their rights. The cost of pursuing a legal case is frequently prohibitive without court fee waivers or free legal assistance. Legal empowerment that includes free legal advice and representation has proven critical in facilitating justice for women and girls.

Women complainants must often rely on free legal advice and representation to manoeuvre trials successfully and to claim all possible remedies. Such free support services ideally cover legal aid throughout the legal process, access to interpretation and translation of legal documents for women from, for example, immigrant or indigenous communities who do not speak the dominant language.<sup>35</sup> Countries often struggle with ways

## RWANDA'S COMPREHENSIVE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE LAW

Two decades after emerging from a genocidal war infused with pervasive rapes and gender violence, Rwanda is now the first nation in the world to sport a majority of women in top decision-making bodies. Women's status and situation changed for the better in urban and rural areas, according to a national expert.<sup>36</sup> While violence against women continues to plague the country, a 2008 law helped shape institutional and societal responses to wife beatings and rapes, complemented by legal guarantees for women's equal rights to inherit and own land and property.<sup>37</sup> Rooted in regional and international human rights principles, Rwanda's 2008 Prevention and Punishment of Gender-Based Violence is one of few laws worldwide to define 'gender' to include gender roles and to apply explicitly to men and women. It broadly defines GBV to include "any act that results in a bodily, psychological, sexual and economic harm to somebody just because they are female or male" which can occur "within or outside households".

Rwanda's history and realities have informed the progressive law. Between 200,000 and 250,000 women were reportedly raped during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.<sup>38</sup> Seventy per cent of survivors contracted HIV from their rapists.<sup>39</sup> In 1998, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, an ad hoc tribunal set up to address war-related crimes in Rwanda, issued a precedent-setting decision recognising systematic rape against women as a weapon of war and an egregious violation of international criminal and humanitarian law.<sup>40</sup> The 2008 anti-GBV law recognises rape as a very serious crime, subject to a sentence from 10 years up to life

imprisonment if the victim suffers terminal illness or death. Spousal rape and harassment offences are punishable by six months to two years in prison.<sup>41</sup>

The act established One Stop Centres offering critical integrated services that merged the multiple steps, offices and travel previously required for reporting gender violence. One Stop Centres, staffed by dedicated healthcare providers, police and social workers, offer medical exams, HIV and STI diagnostics, counselling and treatment. Onsite police officers promptly compile medical and other evidence in reports submitted for legal proceedings. The "whole process takes approximately four hours".<sup>42</sup> The Centres also link survivors to legal aid and provide short-term accommodation for those in need of shelter or intensive care.<sup>43</sup> In addition, Gender Desks exist in all 75 police stations nationwide and each District has an Access to Justice Office dedicated to GBV.<sup>44</sup>

Robust prosecution and conviction rates attest to the strong commitment to respond to high rates of GBV. From January 2011 to May 2012, 750 out of 1,090 prosecuted rape cases resulted in convictions, with 71 perpetrators sentenced to life in prison.<sup>45</sup> According to police statistics, reported GBV cases have dropped since the passage of the law; a near four per cent drop was recorded between 2011 and 2012, particularly for rape cases. The drop has been attributed to public awareness and enforcement of the law.<sup>46</sup> The GBV Strategic Plan for 2011-2016 cites an increase in GBV cases reported to police between 2009 and 2010, attributing the initial rise to "awareness raised on GBV and measures taken to prevent and respond to GBV."<sup>47</sup>

to create and maintain such high-cost legal aid schemes, even for critical cases. Where free legal aid is available, eligibility for services may be based on family income, ignoring the reality of women often being unable to access those resources directly themselves.<sup>48</sup>

Domestic violence laws in 45 countries mandate free legal aid for women.<sup>49</sup> **Austria's** law mandates legal aid and support throughout the justice process. In the **Philippines**, the Rape Victims Assistance Act set up rape crisis centres which provide free legal aid. **Guatemala's** Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence against Women obliges free government-funded legal assistance to survivors.<sup>50</sup> To ensure access to justice for victims of trafficking, the Council of Europe's Convention on Action against

Trafficking in Human Beings requires states to provide free legal aid for victims.<sup>51</sup> Some laws allow organisations to pursue cases on behalf of victims who are unable to bring a case themselves. Under **Honduras'** Criminal Procedure Code, women's rights organisations authorised to represent survivors (at no cost for the victim) have brought sexual violence cases in conjunction with the country's public prosecutor.<sup>52</sup> UN Women's 2011 In Pursuit of Justice report profiles a US study that "found that women supported by specialised advocates for survivors of rape, who helped them navigate the justice system, were more likely to make police reports, more likely to receive healthcare and less likely to report distress in their dealings with the different service providers."<sup>53</sup>

## THE PHILIPPINES' LAW – COMPREHENSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE PROTECTION

The Philippines' Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004 reflects international best practices. The law criminalises physical, sexual and psychological violence, as well as economic abuse, and uniquely references all public sectors required for optimal inter-sectoral implementation. The law is gender-specific and applies only to women and their children; it extends protection from violence by any man with whom the victim has an intimate relationship.<sup>54</sup> Women can access comprehensive protection orders from municipal courts that address protection, support and custody. They can also access temporary protection orders from village ('barangay') officials, ensuring access to critical protection measures at the most local level. The law established trained Women and Child Protection Desks, now available in nearly all police stations across the country, though some police officers continue to lack knowledge about the law, display gender insensitivity and advise abused women to reconcile with their partners. An all-women Protection Centre and Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team deals with extreme crimes against women. Hospital-based Women and Child Protection Units operate in more than half of public-health hospitals, offering services to women and

children victimised by intimate partner and gender-based violence.

The government has made a concerted effort to sensitise and inform duty-bearers, from the village level to law enforcers and judges, on implementing the law. Responding to an identified need to increase gender sensitivity among judges, the Philippine Judiciary developed an interactive bench book with decisions on women's rights cases, making relevant jurisprudence and legal reasoning available to judges, and conducted a series of training sessions for court personnel.<sup>55</sup> Innovative grassroots programmes address violence against women, such as 'Men Opposed to Violence against Women Everywhere' working to modify gender stereotypical attitudes that justify domestic violence.<sup>56</sup>

Since the passage of the law with its nuanced implementation measures, more women have reported VAW cases to the police, from 218 cases in 2004 to 11,531 in 2012. Increased reporting is attributed to ongoing "information campaigns on the law and its strict implementation".<sup>57</sup> Encouragingly, the number of reported incidents of physical injury has decreased, in part due to the deterrence provided by the law penalising abuse by spouses and intimate partners.<sup>58</sup>

### Domestic Violence Laws

Over two-thirds (125) of all countries have laws on domestic violence, up from only 89 in 2006.<sup>59</sup> According to UN Women analysis, countries with domestic violence laws have lower rates of intimate partner violence and fewer people find violence against women acceptable.<sup>60</sup> In 2005, when Cambodia passed an anti-domestic violence law, 64 per cent of baseline survey respondents knew a husband who physically abused his wife compared with 53 per cent in the 2009 follow-up survey.<sup>61</sup> Fewer Malawians considered domestic violence to be acceptable following the enactment of a Domestic Violence Act in 2006, which bars violence between spouses, family members, and financially dependent relations.<sup>62</sup> Comparing public perceptions about domestic violence captured before and after the Act's passage, the Demographic and Household Surveys reveal that in 2010 fewer respondents reported that wife-beating is justifiable. Whereas in 2004 nearly 25 per cent of women and 17 per cent of men believed domestic violence was acceptable, by 2010 that number had dropped to 11 and 13 per cent respectively.<sup>63</sup> While

the law suffers from patchy implementation, its mere existence seems to provide positive shifts in attitude.

Widespread legal reforms have sought to rectify historic dismissal and marginalisation of violence in the home as a 'private family matter' by drawing on multiple legal strategies. While no law has eradicated domestic violence, legal advocates generally consider as effective 1) civil protection orders, 2) pro-arrest and pro-prosecution policies, and 3) the passage of laws targeting the causes of gender violence, such as readily available weapons and excessive alcohol consumption.

#### 1. Protection orders

Protection orders (POs), also known as restraining orders or keeping the peace orders, constitute the most common legal strategy for domestic violence victims, with increasingly more laws spelling out procedures for obtaining and enforcing such orders. Primarily a civil remedy, POs are typically issued by the court, though some laws seek to make the orders more accessible, especially in rural and remote areas, where police officers, local administrators and



other state agents are authorised to issue temporary orders which courts can then convert into permanent orders. POs often go beyond barring an abuser from contacting or harming his partner. They might order offenders to vacate a shared residence, pay maintenance and child support, or attend counselling or treatment for substance abuse. Violation of a PO, whether temporary or final, may result in civil or criminal penalties at a felony or misdemeanour level, depending on the jurisdiction. Though considered generally useful and empowering to women, POs have inconsistently protected victims, and their violations rarely result in arrests, undermining the intended goal of violence prevention.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, while POs are ideally issued through an easy and accessible process, victims are more likely to be granted a PO if they have legal representation.

**Georgia's** 2006 domestic violence law sets up a protective orders system to arm police with a much-needed tool to deal with domestic violence. Under the new law, police may issue 24-hour restraining orders on the scene of a domestic violence incident. Victims can request courts to issue similar civil protective orders for up to three months. Between 2006 and 2009, NGOs registered more than 7,200 in-person and hotline consultations from domestic violence survivors, reinforcing the dire need for legal aid for those affected by abuse.<sup>65</sup>

In the **United States**, where each state regulates local law enforcement responses, POs have been found to be “among the most effective legal remedies available for domestic violence”. According to a study by the National Center for State Courts, which surveyed women six months after they had obtained civil protection orders, over 85 per cent of women felt their lives had improved since getting the order, over 80 per cent felt safer, and 65 per cent of the orders had not been violated.<sup>66</sup> Studies

also concluded, however, that more than half of offenders repeated their abuse following the POs. Overall, women reported feeling empowered by having the POs, suggesting that the symbolic value of societal recognition of wrongdoing against them may be particularly powerful for domestic violence victims.

Teen dating violence prompted specific legislation to account for victims' age, the emotional and psychological vulnerabilities of adolescent minds and bodies, and the potential lifelong consequences, for both victims and the perpetrator, of criminal sanctions. A state-by-state review of teen dating violence laws in the United States highlighted best practices for POs most relevant to teenage victims of domestic and dating violence. Effective POs covered teen dating (including same-sex dating) as a protected relationship and could be issued against teen abusers, addressed abusive use of technology and property damage often found in teen violence incidents, and could be granted to the minor on her own behalf or via feasible alternatives.<sup>67</sup>

## 2. Pro-Arrest and Pro-Prosecution Policies

Given the historic reluctance to arrest and prosecute domestic abusers, and in some instances, allow victims to drop cases due to pressure from the batterer or from family members, some jurisdictions have experimented with more aggressive judicial system interventions to prioritise arrests and prosecutions, but stop short of forcing victims to be part of trials against their will. Initial support for mandatory arrests and prosecutions of alleged abusers in domestic violence situations has been dampened by evidence suggesting the limited deterrence value, concerns about loss of income when a primary breadwinner is arrested, bias in arrests of individuals from marginalised populations, the increased likelihood that battered women themselves will be arrested and prosecuted, and general concerns about victims' loss of autonomy over their cases.

## 3. Subsidiary laws targeting causes

Firearms owned by civilians are responsible for the bulk of homicides in many countries.<sup>68</sup> According to US-based studies cited by the International Action Network on Small Arms Statistics, the mere presence of a gun in the home increases women's risk of being murdered by an intimate partner by 272 per cent.<sup>69</sup> The 2013 Small Arms Survey cites data for 111 countries and territories that “shows that around 66,000 women are killed violently each year, making up 17 per cent of all intentional



homicides. About one in three of these femicides is committed with a firearm.<sup>70</sup> In countries where guns are available, they are the weapon of choice for killing female intimate partners.<sup>71</sup> The World Health Organisation concluded that jurisdictions with more restrictive firearms policies and lower firearms ownership tend to experience lower levels of firearms violence.<sup>72</sup> Several US states supplemented the federal law, which forbids possession of firearms by offenders who are subject to a restraining order protecting an intimate partner. These states' laws require background checks on all buyers of weapons, to identify those with restraining orders against them, and authorise police to confiscate firearms at the scene of a domestic violence incident. Research asserts that where states could conduct such background checks and prevent the purchase of firearms, restraining orders reduced intimate-partner homicides.<sup>73</sup>

Based on research that linked excessive alcohol consumption by men to greater violence against women, several countries passed laws to curb hours of alcohol sale – to great success. Responding to data that the bulk of VAW and gender-related murders occurred between 11pm and 6am in areas dense with bars, a 2002 city ordinance in Diadema, Brazil, banned the sale of alcohol after 11pm. The law was strictly enforced by a dedicated multi-agency unit supporting the municipal civil guard and led to a dramatic drop in homicides and assaults against women.<sup>74</sup> Similar positive outcomes were recorded in Colombian cities that had restricted hours for the sale of alcohol.



GEORGE PHILLIPS/AMO/PANOS PICTURES

## Rape and Sexual Violence Laws

Across the globe, laws penalising sexual violence continuously expand their scope and enforcement capacity. Laudable legal developments stress the victim's lack of consent rather than the use of force to define the crime of rape, extend rape beyond forced intercourse to encompass nonconsensual intrusion into multiple body parts including by objects, and remove exemptions for rape by spouses. Specialised courts with victim-sensitive procedures have emerged as a promising practice and can be credited with increasing the number of rapes reported to the police and the proportion of rapists convicted.

Promising legal reforms around sexual violence signal a shift in the understanding of rape as a crime rather than an offence against morality and 'decent women'. Several Latin American countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Ecuador, removed from their codes stereotypical language of attack on 'decent women', 'purity' and 'chastity' in favour of language on sexual violence and victims.<sup>75</sup> Many countries, including Canada, the US, Peru, Honduras, Bolivia, El Salvador, Dominican Republic and Ecuador, now exclude a victim's sexual history or 'honourable reputation' from the judicial process. In a historic 2010 decision, *Karen Tayag Vertido v. Philippines*, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) committee condemned a local Philippines court for reprimanding an alleged rape victim for not actively fighting off her assailant, once she regained her consciousness during the rape.

Brazil's Maria da Penha Law on Violence against Women (2006) has been cited as one of the most advanced in the world. Named after a woman who was left paraplegic after being abused and shot by her husband, the law marked the culmination of a lengthy campaign by women's groups, and a landmark case against Brazil at the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights. The law provides a variety of legal protections, including special courts and police desks, preventive detentions of potential abusers who make severe threats, increased penalties for perpetrators, and affirmative measures to assist women, including vulnerable domestic workers, and to educate the public about the issue and the law.<sup>76</sup> The law requires 'permanent training' of law enforcement and judges.<sup>77</sup> Over 381 police stations across the country provide psychological counselling, temporary shelter and hospital treatment for victims of domestic violence and rape, as well as criminal prosecution assistance by investigating incidents and forwarding evidence to courts.<sup>78</sup>

Five years after the law's adoption, the National Council of Justice of Brazil praised its harvest of more than 331,000 prosecutions and 110,000 final judgments, and nearly two million calls to the Service Center for Women.<sup>79</sup> In 2012, the free national hotline responded to 732,468 domestic violence calls.<sup>80</sup> A new international hotline enables Brazilian victims of gender-based violence to call in from Italy, Spain and Portugal. In the first six months of 2013, the international service received 90 calls, resulting in 33 women receiving assistance abroad.<sup>81</sup> A study by the Institute for Applied Economic Research compared data on GBV-related homicides before and after the 2006 adoption of the law and found that GBV rates had remained stable since 2001.<sup>82</sup> The law has reached urban centres successfully; authorities are now focusing on more distant areas, pending needed funding and outreach. In March 2012, President Dilma Rousseff launched the 265 million reais (\$114.2 million) Women, Living Without Violence initiative to expand the hotline, add public healthcare options, and construct another 27 women's centres throughout the country that integrate specialised police, judicial, prosecutorial, health, employment and other ministerial resources.<sup>83</sup>

## Cyber Gender Harassment Laws

**Increasingly more laws are popping up to target the emergent phenomenon of digital sexual harassment. Still in their infancy, these laws' effectiveness remains to be seen. More than a third of the world's total population is online, with over 60 per cent of all internet users based in the global South, and 45 per cent are under 25.<sup>84</sup> Yet a comprehensive 2013 UNODC Study on Cybercrime found that, overall, "courts show minimal levels of specialisation for cybercrime" and that "over 60 per cent of lesser developed countries reported that specialised prosecutors either had basic or no IT skills, and intermediate computer equipment or none at all".<sup>85</sup>**

Cyber gender harassment, stalking, and digital and online social media sexual abuse profoundly damage psychological and physical health, at times leading to suicides. Such online gender harassment pushes girls and women offline and while it "inflicts the most direct costs on targeted individuals, it harms society as well by entrenching male hierarchy online".<sup>86</sup> Cyber harassment is gendered, as it primarily targets women and the abuse generally "invokes gender in threatening and demeaning terms". Forms of online gender abuse include: rape threats; cyberbullying, such as attacking girls' 'morality' and character in sexually

**degrading ways on electronic media – chat rooms, social media and texts, for example – manipulating photographs to portray girls and women being harmed or in digitally altered pornographic images; posting home addresses with text inviting anonymous sex or 'rape visits'; technological attacks to bring down feminist blogs and websites; and electronic blackmailing.**

Despite the challenges in enforcing internet content laws, some promising strong laws are working to deter and punish offenders while sending unequivocal condemnation of such harassment as unacceptable, actionable behaviour. The US Violence against Women Act specifically bans cyberstalking and intimidation, and emotional distress from digital harassment.<sup>87</sup> India's 2013 criminal law amendments employ gender-specific language to penalise men for cyberstalking, online sexual voyeurism, and dissemination of private pictures of women against their wishes.<sup>88</sup>

Many countries draw on existing anti-discrimination and privacy guarantees, criminal (e.g. sexual harassment) and tort laws (e.g. laws on libel and slander) to address online abuse. Common remedies include financial compensation or damages, injunctions, restraining orders and criminal convictions.

Some governments enacted 'cyberstalking' or 'cyber-harassment' laws while others amended existing stalking or harassment laws to cover electronic forms of communication. Some US states explicitly cover cyberstalking in their stalking statutes.<sup>89</sup> Better targeted legislation adequately captures the unique nature of cyber harassment and stalking, which are often non-physical yet omnipresent, and can be perpetrated by anonymous abusers based anywhere in the world.

Sextortion has emerged as a particularly gendered form of cyber sexual exploitation. Sextortion refers to the use of coercion to extort sexual favours, which could include participating in sexual chats or exposing body parts in videos or photographs. It also captures threats to release into the public domain sexual images or information often obtained without the target's consent. The combination of off- and online elements in sextortion has made existing legal frameworks barring sexual harassment or abuse of power and corruption insufficient. Under **US Federal law**, the FBI has successfully prosecuted sextortion cases over the past few years, issuing multi-year sentences. In March 2014, a 20-year-old college student was sentenced to 18 months in prison on sextortion charges for hacking into computers of



young women and extorting them to send him nude photos and videos, or to submit to Skype sessions in which he convinced two teens to undress on camera.<sup>90</sup>

Cyber gender harassment and cyberbullying pose particular threats to children's perceived safety in their school. A growing number of states have adopted anti-bullying laws geared at minors that cover on- and offline conduct, on and off campus. As with cyber harassment laws, anti-bullying laws are gender neutral in scope. In 2012, New York State expanded the Dignity for All Students Act (in state schools) beyond traditional harassment and discrimination to include cyberbullying, even if it takes place off campus, on the school bus or at afterhours school functions, if such harassment and abuse could reasonably be expected to affect students while at school. While the law might raise free speech challenges, it has to date served as a pioneering tool to facilitate a safe learning environment for students.<sup>91</sup>

### CANADA'S CYBER SAFETY ACT

Legislators in Nova Scotia, Canada, passed the 2013 Cyber Safety Act following public outcry over the cyberbullying-related suicide of a teenage girl who was allegedly sexually assaulted by four boys who photographed the incident and circulated it online at her school. The new law enables victims to report cyberbullying as a crime to police, to receive a protection order banning communication or contact by the offender, and to take a bully to court. It clarifies the role of school principals and holds parents responsible for patrolling their under-18 children's online conduct. The law created a "first-of-its kind police unit dealing solely with cyberbullying complaints. The unit receives 25 calls every day, and since its inception in September 2013, it has worked on 153 cases."<sup>92</sup>

The international human rights legal framework, created pre-internet era, inadequately addresses cyber harassment of children and adults and has not caught up with new forms of online and digital abuse. Considered the leading international document on cybercrime, the Council of Europe's 2001 Convention on Cybercrime sets up a cooperative framework, outlines basic cybercrimes, focusing on data protection, privacy, and economic harms, and covers content-based offences such as child pornography.<sup>93</sup> It sets up much needed inter-state cooperation to combat cybercrime, but eschews mention of cyber harassment of any kind, including gender-based stalking.

## Harmful Traditional Practices Regulation

Harmful traditional practices (HTPs) tend to stem from entrenched gender inequality and discriminatory norms that result in harm to girls' and women's health and human rights. HTPs affect women throughout their life-cycles, from controversial prenatal sex selection and female infanticide, to child and forced marriages, nutritional taboos, the mistreatment of widows, acid attacks, women being killed in the name of 'honour', women being exchanged as blood-money payment, and dowry-related deaths. There is no exhaustive list of HTPs against women, and some remain controversial, even among feminists. New and emerging harmful practices continuously develop, requiring nuanced analysis and vigilance. Various societal pressures shape multiple forms of violence against women, which may not be classified as prohibited practices.

Recent precedent-setting court decisions highlight the importance of greater state involvement and commitment to ensure girls' rights are not undermined by harmful traditional practices. A 2008 Economic Community of West African States landmark decision in *Hadijatou Mani Koraou v. the Republic of Niger* found Niger responsible for failing to pass laws to protect a 12-year-old girl from being sold to a 46-year-old tribal chief subjecting her to forced early marriage, forcible sex, and to serving as a household slave.<sup>94</sup> The Special Court for Sierra Leone condemned forced marriage as a crime against humanity (for forcing young women to serve as 'bush wives' for combatants), in the case of Revolutionary United Front leaders accused of atrocities committed during Sierra Leone's civil war.<sup>95</sup>

### Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM), which includes various forms of ritual cutting and, at times, stitching up of the female genital organs – leading to damage to health and widely seen as a form of sexuality control – has been subject to extensive legal regulation.<sup>96</sup> In intensifying global efforts for the elimination of FGM, the UN General Assembly in 2012 denounced FGM as "irreparable, irreversible abuse of the human rights of woman and girls, and a threat to their health", urging states to condemn all harmful practices affecting women and girls, whether committed within or outside a medical institution; and to take all measures – including legislation – to protect women and girls from this form of violence and end impunity.<sup>97</sup> The

## THE ANTI-FGM LAW IN BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso, which has a high prevalence of FGM, is hailed as a leading example in the fight against the practice. FGM rates in Burkina Faso dropped by 31 per cent in girls aged 15 to 19 compared with women aged 45 to 49.<sup>98</sup> The government is credited with systematically enforcing its 1996 anti-FGM law, which provides for fines and imprisonment for those who perform the cutting (excisors or medical practitioners), for all persons aware the cutting was to take place who did not warn the proper authorities, and for parents who subject their girls to the practice. Scaled-up enforcement reflected political will and resulted in greater deterrence.

Between 2005 and 2009, 686 people – 40 excisors and 646 parents – were sentenced under the law, up from 94 convictions in the preceding eight years. In 2009, authorities reportedly responded to 230 individual cases and prevented

three planned cuttings. Arrests are usually the result of anonymous tips to a mandated free hotline for reporting planned or completed acts of cutting.<sup>99</sup> Security teams visit communities to dissuade the practice and enforce the law. Accompanying media and community outreach and education interventions resulted in near-complete awareness about the law criminalising the practice, from 78 per cent in 1999 to 92 per cent in 2006. While 21 per cent of girls and women supported the practice in 1999, by 2010 only nine per cent thought it should continue.<sup>100</sup> Though touted as successful in reducing rates and changing attitudes about FGM, Burkina Faso faces residual resistance by officials and magistrates to enforce the law, and concerns about the practice shifted underground or to nearby countries.<sup>101</sup>

Committees tasked with the implementation of CEDAW and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) had previously issued specific guidance on eradicating and protecting children and women from harmful traditional practices, such as FGM, calling it a human rights violation. The practice is explicitly prohibited by the African Union's Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women.



Since 2000, the bulk of countries (83 per cent) with the highest rates of FGM banned the practice. Overall, 59 countries, including 26 in Africa and the Middle East, prohibit the practice. Most anti-FGM laws punish those who perform the cutting, while some also punish those who facilitate or know about the cutting (e.g. Burkina Faso). A few only protect children (e.g. the US, Canada, Tanzania, Mauritania), and several extend the penalty for FGM performed outside its borders (e.g. Kenya).<sup>102</sup> While debates continue about the efficacy of legal FGM bans as a deterrence, especially when they run counter to social norms and beliefs, UNICEF cites consensus that such laws "should be one of a set of interventions by governments to support special movement towards [FGM's] elimination". Effective legislative strategies, especially in resistant communities, "complement efforts in the social sphere and contribute to collective abandonment of the practice".<sup>103</sup>

To assess the efficacy of anti-FGM laws, experts compare rates of acceptance of the practice and the reported rates of its commission before and after the enactment of the law. Based on a

UNICEF analysis, overall, even where FGM is nearly universal, fewer women and girls want FGM to continue and the practice is generally becoming less common.<sup>104</sup> Marked disapproval of the practice was reported in Central African Republic, Egypt and Sierra Leone following their criminalisation of FGM. A change in attitude against the practice tends to be followed by an actual decline in it. While outreach and awareness about the harms of the practice are critical, so are laws that reinforce decreased support for criminal acts.

Concluding that "civil protection orders have proven to be one of the most effective legal mechanisms in protecting women from violence", the UN Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women instructs governments to provide for emergency and long-term protection orders or injunctions (that forbid the act from being carried out) in relation to any harmful practice. Such protection orders could be issued against an individual or a group, such a family or a community.<sup>105</sup> In a historic 2000 case, a Kenyan court in Rift Valley issued a permanent injunction against the father of two teenage girls, barring him from forcing them to undergo FGM. The court also required the father to continue to provide financial support for his daughters.<sup>106</sup> A decade after Kenya passed its initial anti-FGM law in 2001, the rate of FGM has declined steadily among many of the ethnic groups where previously almost all girls were circumcised. In fewer than three generations, the practice has been near-eradicated among the Kalenjin, Kikuyu and Meru communities.<sup>107</sup>

Philippines.

PUNISHABLE ACTS	PENALTIES	
	 FINE	 IMPRISONMENT
Regular Acts of Trafficking	P1million to P2million	20 years
Acts that Promote Trafficking	P500,000	15 years
Use of Trafficked Persons for	P50,000	6 months

PLAN

## Anti-Trafficking in Humans for Exploitation Laws

Internationally, the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, provides the blueprint for the transnational fight against human trafficking and modern slavery, with particular attention to women and children.<sup>108</sup> The Trafficking Protocol introduced the concept of the '3Ps' – Prevention, victim Protection, and Prosecution efforts to combat trafficking, now part of laws in the 159 countries bound by the Protocol.<sup>109</sup> Robust laws are supplemented by mandated anti-trafficking training to ensure law enforcement, prosecutors, judges and other officials fully grasp the elements of trafficking crimes, the evidence necessary for convictions, and the impact of context on victims, especially the dynamics of trauma and dependency.

As a result of the Trafficking Protocol, the number of countries with specific anti-trafficking laws has more than doubled over the past decade, increasing prosecutions against offenders.<sup>110</sup> More than 140 countries have criminalised sex and labour trafficking.<sup>111</sup> The US Department of State reported increasing rates of identifying victims, prosecution and conviction of traffickers across the world. According to global law enforcement data provided by countries, 7,705 traffickers were prosecuted and 4,746 convicted in 2012, up from 5,682 and 3,427 respectively five years earlier.<sup>112</sup> In Nicaragua, a close partnership between the Public Prosecutor's Anti-Corruption and Anti-Organised Crime Unit and the National Police's Anti-TIP Unit scaled-up investigations, evidence collection and enforcement efforts. As a result, trafficking prosecutions rose from zero to a record high of 35 in 2012.<sup>113</sup>

Many women and children trafficked for sexual exploitation are mislabelled and convicted as prostitutes. To avoid criminalising child victims, several US states adopted 'safe harbour laws that automatically treat children as victims in need of services rather than prosecuting them for prostitution, which is illegal in most of the country. Other US states permit victims to petition the court to erase prostitution-related criminal convictions if they resulted from human trafficking.<sup>114</sup> There is a growing promising trend – led by European states – to criminalise the demand for paid sexual services. Based on studies suggesting that sex trafficking has increased in high-income countries that made prostitution legal, the European Parliament voted to criminalise the purchase of sex in 2014.<sup>115</sup> The Parliament adopted the Nordic Model, spearheaded by Sweden in 1999 and rooted in notions of gender equality, which punishes those who buy sex, but protects those who sell it. While critics fear the approach will drive sex work underground and increase the vulnerability of prostituted persons to violence and exploitation, punishing the 'demand' for commercial sex holds promising potential for reducing sex trafficking.

Anti-trafficking laws that allow for compensation to be invoked as part of the criminal proceedings are considered better practice, merging multiple legal proceedings, and minimising harm to the victim. Promising laws require compensation from the perpetrators, a government fund, or social assistance and social integration support. More than a decade after the country first criminalised trafficking, a Serbian court awarded compensation to a trafficking victim. The award, assessed at 1 million Serbian dinars (\$11,800) for mental anguish and fear, resulted from a separate civil trial following the criminal conviction of the traffickers, subjecting the victim to the trauma of reliving their experience and dragging the process over seven years.<sup>116</sup>



Mural painted by children at the main port, Masbate, Philippines.



# Case Studies – Promising practice



## 1 The Central American Women's Fund<sup>1</sup>

### Background

Established in 2003, Fondo Centroamericano de Mujeres (FCAM) is a feminist organisation dedicated to mobilising resources to strengthen the women's movement in Central America, and to supporting the initiatives of young women's groups and organisations that promote women's rights.

FCAM believes that the ever-growing women and girls' movement in Central America is the key to achieving long-term social transformation for adolescent girls and their communities, with adolescent girls as the agents of change.

Ola Joven (Young Waves), FCAM's core programme, supports organisations led by girls to improve their own lives, specifically those working on sexual and reproductive rights, young women's participation and leadership and physical and emotional integrity. Their work is rooted in a feminist theory of change that recognises profound social and cultural change is fundamental to the establishment and sustainability of gender equality. In line with this, FCAM do not create their own initiatives, but rather identify and work with local adolescent girl and young women's groups.

### Key beneficiaries

- The initiatives of young women's groups whose members are between 16 and 30 years of age.
- Community-based organisations and women's rights organisations.

### Objectives

To provide funding and support for women's groups and youth organisations

working with young women, whose leaders and members are between the ages of 16 and 30. Those supported focus on the following strategic areas:

- Physical and emotional integrity, promoting girls' and women's right to sexual and reproductive health services and information, and reducing the violence, abuse, harassment and exploitation of young women and girls.
- Economic justice, eliminating discrimination against young women in access to employment, land titles and safe working conditions, and implementing and strengthening their labour rights.
- Promoting participation and leadership, and ensuring young women's access to information, skills and tools to change their role within their families, communities and society.

### Methods

- Annual grant-making cycles select young women's organisations across six countries<sup>2</sup> which present creative and forward-thinking projects to tackle the key focus issues.
- Using a combination of workshops, FCAM contributes to strengthening these organisations; workshops include an introduction for potential grantees on how to prepare their final project proposals, and a basic financial management workshop on budgeting and accounting.
- The organisation also arranges various group activities to facilitate peer learning and the creation of alliances between young women's organisations. These include four Ola Joven Feminist Camps, spaces for young women to come together to identify and analyse the complex relationship of power and control they have to negotiate in their everyday lives.
- FCAM also implements robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of these projects. These come in the forms of annual evaluation workshops, mid-term site visits where FCAM staff conduct follow-ups on grantee programmes and provide additional training and support, and random audits, for 15 per cent of groups that received

multi-year support, to assess the financial management and performance of their projects.

- As receivers of funding, grantees also agree to present mid-year narrative and financial reports, allowing a space for reflection, an opportunity to highlight areas of improvement and record the development of the project's proposed activities.
- These M&E processes not only seek to assess the impact of each project on policies and institutions, but also on community behaviours and attitudes.

## Results

- In the first year of grant provision, FCAM awarded \$13,000 to young women's initiatives. To date, FCAM has invested \$11.6 million in programmes, of which \$8.5 million have been donations directly to organisations and networks of women. Fifty-three per cent of these are specifically led by young women.
- Over a 10-year period, FCAM has provided support to 274 groups, organisations and networks, of which 30 are human rights defenders and six are women's funds. Fifty-three per cent of these are led by young women.
- Of all the funds raised in the past 10 years, 16 per cent (\$2,163,853) has been invested in the capacity-building programme, including M&E.
- Since Ola Joven has been running, local government has begun to take notice of the work of adolescent girls groups, by inviting them to take part in the planning of policy.
- The ongoing and detailed impact evaluations of Ola Joven have equipped FCAM and their grantees with a valuable understanding of how change really happens 'on the ground'. Founder of the fund Ana Criquillon notes that their dynamic approach to M&E has allowed grantees "to regroup and reorient [their] work in order to adapt to change ... instead of only being accountable about the indicators and the hypotheses."<sup>3</sup>
- The grantee groups have recognised the contribution of FCAM to improving their resource utilisation, relationships with money, organisational development and the management of the power dynamics

within their groups. One Ola Joven workshop attendee expressed: "When we started we were a weak group, we did not know how to lead a group and did not have much communication. Now we are secure, we have more confidence, we care for each other... we also assume our leadership, decisions are made by consensus, and we have learned to delegate."<sup>4</sup>

## Good practice

- FCAM's model of monitoring and evaluation incorporates a complex and adaptive analysis of change, taking into account not just a project's impact on institutions and individuals, but shifts in social norms and relationships and behaviours within communities. This movement signifies a focus away from more linear assessments of impact (for example, the number of girls who completed a particular programme and their responses to it) to more holistic ones (changes in the attitudes of their wider community).
- Through this approach, grantees can identify the more subtle and area-specific barriers to their project's impact that other, less complex models may miss: by being actively involved in the M&E process, FCAM develops a stronger understanding of the realities and contexts of grantees' work.
- Participation in camps and workshops fosters collective power, facilitates the creation of a shared pool of knowledge and resources and can integrate groups of young women into political action and discussion on issues affecting them at the departmental and national levels.

## Lessons learned

- It is vital to take time to talk to parents, guardians and teachers to increase wider support and engagement.
- Young women have a clear idea of what their priorities are; they can be strategic and responsible, make their own decisions and alliances, and therefore must be listened to.
- Methodologies that are playful and allow the exchange of experiences increase confidence and create an environment more conducive to learning.





## 2 Girl Power in Bangladesh

### Background

Girl Power: Promoting Equal Rights and Opportunities for Girls and Young Women is a multi-country programme running from 2011-2015.<sup>5</sup> Its overall objective is to build and strengthen civil society to ensure girls' rights and achieve gender equality, and it focuses on four strategic themes: protection against violence, socio-political participation, economic participation and post-primary education.<sup>6</sup>

In Bangladesh, the programme looks specifically at the prevention of violence against girls and young women. It works across eight districts of the country. Various partner non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are involved, including Plan International Bangladesh, Aparajeyo Bangladesh (AB), Association for Community Development (ACD), Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC), NariUddog Kendra (NUK), Shariatpur Development Society (SDS), SamajUnnayanPrashikshan Kendra (SUPK), UdayanSwabolombeeSangstha (USS), Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) and Rupantar.

### Key beneficiaries

- In 2013, the programme reached 25,999 girls and young women, 1,166 communities and 27,804 households through its training, community activities and awareness-raising. Some 779 frontline staff from government institutions were trained via the programme, which directly supported 1,002 civil society organisations (CSOs), grassroots and media professionals. By 2015, the programme aims to reach 95,101 girls and young women across Bangladesh.

### Objectives

- To strengthen CSOs' ability to influence policy through lobbying and advocacy, in order to establish rights and justice for girls and young women.

- To increase awareness and knowledge among families, community leaders, government officials, public authorities and school teachers on the rights of girls and young women.
- To improve legal protection system for girls and young women.
- To strengthen the capacity of girls and young women to protect themselves against gender-based violence.

### Methods

- PNGOs organised a range of capacity-building training sessions for girls and young women, including life skills training, martial arts classes for self-defence, and awareness training on child protection and child rights.
- Theatre for Development (TFD) performances were organised on a variety of themes related to the Girl Power Project. TFD performances use the spoken word, drama, music and dance to engage the audience on specific issues including violence and child marriage.
- Child rights and child protection training and gender training were organised for local leaders, community-based organisations and other relevant groups. PNGOs also facilitated the formation and management of forums for girls and young women.
- At the institutional level, PNGOs organised child protection and gender training for government officials across regional and national bodies.
- The remainder of activities focused on strengthening the child protection system through policy advocacy and local level lobbying, facilitating networking between civil society organisations, running sensitisation workshops for journalists on gender and child protection, and providing awards to journalists for good practice.

### Results

- The programme's mid-term review showed a striking difference in girls' and young women's reported ability to say no to sexual activity following the programme's implementation. For example, in 2011, only 24 per cent of teenage girls and 24 per cent of young women felt able to say no to sexual activity; by 2013, these

figures had risen to almost 100 per cent for both groups.

- Although the present of violence in the lives of girls and young women was still significant, some respondents indicated that “day-by-day physical tortures” as well as teachers beating girls and child labour had been reduced as a result of the programme. This included physical violence related to dowry, as expressed by one teenage girl: *“Previously, husbands used to batter wives severely until they get dowry. But nowadays, legal action against dowry and wife battering has created some alarm within them.”*
- Girls’ knowledge of how to act if they experience violence has increased substantially: 88 per cent of 14 to 17-year-olds, for example, stated they felt they knew where to go in the event of violence – three times as many as reported by the baseline survey.
- Community members were also found to be far less supportive of the idea that parents or teachers should be allowed to beat their children. Respondents commented that they saw the physical punishment of children as “very harmful for children’s physical and psychological development”, and they felt it created “distance [between] parent-child relationships”.
- The Bangladesh Girl Power Project has built a wide network of organisations and individuals at the civil society level, and developed extensive knowledge and experience regarding protection and the consequences of violence against women. Regular meetings and advocacy workshops initiated by partners have contributed to collaboration between civil society organisations.
- The sensitisation of local journalists to the issues of girls’ rights and child marriage resulted in positive coverage of Girl Power Project activities, despite some initial resistance to training on gender sensitivity.
- As part of the strategy to reduce the incidence of child marriage across Bangladesh, USS, SUPK, Plan Bangladesh and local partner organisations conducted advocacy workshops for stakeholders, including government officials. These resulted in government officers

committing to several actions on the prevention of child marriage, including agreeing to share information across government departments on suspected cases, and distributing a list of authorised marriage registrars, and accompanying identification cards, to administrative government units across Bangladesh to help reduce the number of fake marriage registrars operating across the country.

## Good practice

- The Girl Power Project’s multi-dimensional approach includes addressing media coverage of violence against girls and young women, community attitudes around gender and abuse, and girls’ and young women’s own knowledge and ability to prevent and report violence. It deals with both the patriarchal structures within communities that provide perpetrators with impunity, the reproduction of ideas supportive of violence in the media, the individual empowerment of girls and the provision of services and support at civil society level, necessarily attacking the problem from the root up.

## Lessons learned

- At the suggestion of community members, future implementation will focus on involving young men, in order to address potential perpetrators as well as potential victims.
- Within civil society organisations, staff turnover is high, and new staff appear not to have been made familiar with the early work of the Girl Power Project. This has impeded progress, and must be addressed.
- Following violent protests against verdicts of the war tribunal in February 2013, public life in Dhaka and other regions was brought to a halt. Throughout the year, unrest forced the Girl Power Project to reschedule activities. Output figures for 2013 were not affected, but planned activities had to take place in a limited time frame, and implementation was less effective. Partners of the Girl Power Project have planned to increase the impact of their interventions through further training.

## 3 Progressio in partnership with Nagaad – Promoting Equitable Representation of Women in Decision Making in Somaliland<sup>7</sup>

### Background

Progressio is an international development charity focusing on empowering poor and marginalised women and girls in post-conflict states, and currently operating across nine countries, including Somaliland. Working with partners Nagaad and SONYO, umbrella organisations aimed at mobilising and empowering youth and women in political and public life, their lobbying and awareness-raising activities succeeded in establishing a National Youth Policy in 2011, and in reducing the voting age and the age of local and presidential election candidates from 35 to 25.<sup>8</sup>

In 2012, Progressio and Nagaad established the project 'Promoting Equitable Representation of Women in Decision Making', which focused on lobbying for a women's quota at local and national levels, educating communities on the rights of women and girls, and creating spaces for younger activists to connect with existing women's groups. After witnessing the enthusiasm and engagement of young women around the 2010 presidential elections<sup>9</sup>, this project targeted young women well below the voting age, particularly university students, in activities designed to educate them about their rights and in the negotiation of formal political processes.

### Key beneficiaries

- Direct beneficiaries included female university students, activists, political candidates, and women from NGOs and women's groups, across three regions of Somaliland.
- Indirect beneficiaries included the girls and women of Somaliland, particularly those

vulnerable and marginalised from more remote areas, who were targeted by the project.

### Objectives

- To advocate for the adoption of a women's quota in political government in Somaliland – specifically the lobbying of Parliament to enact a quota for women's representation in both local and national governance.
- To rally public support across Somaliland for the increase of women's representation in politics, targeting political parties, cabinet ministers, parliament, local and international NGOs working in Somaliland, the media, Somalia/Somaliland development donors and women's caucuses in all the districts.
- To increase girls' and women's awareness of their rights in regards to leadership, political participation and expression, particularly those in remote areas where media access is limited. This includes a target to increase the number of women candidates in the local elections by 15 per cent.

### Methods

- Nagaad conducted three training workshops with young and adult women on effective advocacy and collective political empowerment, aimed at strengthening existing pressure groups and creating new groups in three regions of Somaliland.
- Three regional workshops were organised for women's caucuses, aimed at increasing and mobilising women in the regions, and forming coalitions that would collaborate in promoting the demands for quotas on women's political participation in Somaliland.
- Civil education training was implemented in 15 districts in three regions of Somaliland, to raise women's and girls' awareness of their rights in regards to education, freedom of expression and political decision-making.
- Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials carrying messages about the women's quota were produced and distributed.



## Results

- Through the workshops, young and adult women were able to gain a deeper understanding of the complex reasons why women have been historically unsuccessful in gaining political power in Somaliland – including identifying how tribal culture and ingrained social gender norms reduce women's space for action.
- Women who attended workshops wrote up strategic plans with deadlines to organise their political activism, including plans to nominate and train local women as candidates for parliamentary election, and to create a fund to support the political participation of women from the Awdal and Salal regions.
- The effective advocacy workshops resulted in women's pressure groups being established in three regions of Somaliland.
- Following both the women's caucuses and the effective advocacy workshops, participants stated that they felt more confident in presenting their ideas to other women, had begun to realise they were entitled to a stake in decision-making and could now see themselves as potential leaders.
- Civic education training took place with 60 young and adult women, in areas where the majority had little or no understanding of political systems, and limited access to education.
- A report assessing women's involvement in the November 2012 local elections noted that there were 28 times as many women candidates (142) as were observed in the 2002 elections, citing Nagaad's work as a primary factor in this increase. The report also noted a substantial increase in young polling staff and candidates and a majority female presence on polling days and at rallies.<sup>10</sup>
- By working to form and strengthen grassroots organisations and pressure groups, Nagaad's activities worked around restrictions on voting and candidacy age, to involve young women in changing the political landscape of their country.
- The content of civic outreach training activities was made relevant to the specific needs and abilities of women from each area, through initial discussions; where women were already organised and had knowledge of quotas, more complex strategies to minimise the misrepresentation of women in both government and private institutions were discussed.
- Focus groups carried out as part of the civil education outreach training took place in single-sex settings, and were divided by age and socio-economic status, to create a safer and more supportive environment for discussions on gender inequality.
- As the 2014 'Because I am a Girl' report has established, women's success in all areas of public life depends not only on their own individual knowledge and drive, but on the dismantling of pervasive gender norms and stereotypes that prevent them from accessing power. Importantly, Progressio and Nagaad's programming addresses these norms through both their training of women and their wider awareness-raising in Somaliland communities.



## Good practice

- Nagaad are committed to encouraging more young women to take part in their workshops so that they may take an active role in shaping their futures. The inclusion of university students alongside older women with a more established political presence in the activities allows for intergenerational networking.

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## Chapter 1

### SECTION 1

#### Chapter 1

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  - 9 This is a common criticism made by women and girls' rights groups working in departments outside of Guatemala City, who note that there are over 20 Mayan dialects.
  - 10 Illustrating how far up the problem of misogynistic justification of violence against women and girls goes, prominent political figures such as the Minister of Government have gone on record saying that in order to avoid rape, young women should not go out after dark.
  - 11 To learn more about the work of Women Changing the World (Mujeres Transformando el Mundo), visit: <http://www.mujerestransformandoelmundo.org>
  - 12 The first group was initiated in June 2013 and consists of eight young female survivors of sexual violence. The support group is still ongoing.
  - 13 These recommendations are jointly the result of my own field research as well as the direct input of women and girls' rights advocates I interviewed in Guatemala.
  - 14 It should be acknowledged that in recent months, there has been an observable increase in the mainstream media in reports about sexual abuse. While this is an important development, there are still concerns that the reporting is sensationalistic and lacks a rights-based focus. There are documented cases of femicide victims' family members learning about the murder by seeing a picture of the girl's body in a newspaper article.
  - 15 This is an explicit recommendation from the Guatemalan Women's Group in their January 2014 report. The Group is a women and girls' rights organisation that provides integrated support to victims and survivors of gender-based violence.
  - 16 State funding for women's and girls' rights organisations is notoriously insufficient and most groups rely on international funding which falls gravely short of meeting the demands of the problem. Despite the work they do in implementing the provision with the Law Against Femicide, for example, organisations such as the Guatemalan Women's Group and Women Changing the World receive little to no State funding.

### Chapter 3 Special Feature

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## Chapter 4

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# Girls online

A list of links to websites, reports, research institutions, databases, campaigns and agencies working on initiatives with a particular focus on girls, young women and disasters.

## Girls' and Women's Rights Organisations

**Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)** is an international organisation working for women's rights, gender equality and development. It works to build alliances and influence international institutions to advance women's issues. AWID provides current and up-to-date information on women's rights in the news as well as profiling recent research and information on a multitude of topics, themes and countries. The AWID Forum is a global women's rights and development conference which brings together leaders and activists to inform and broaden understanding of gender equality.

**Visit:** [awid.org](http://awid.org)

**Camfed** is an organisation dedicated to improving access to education for girls in Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Using a community-based, holistic approach, Camfed provides long-term support, such as fees throughout a girl's schooling; offers business training and small grants to women; and aims to empower women through a partnership with Cama, an association of Camfed alumni and other African women which encourages young African women to become leaders in their own communities. **Find more information at:** [camfed.org](http://camfed.org)

**Central American Women's Fund (CAWF)** is a foundation dedicated to mobilising resources for grassroots women's groups and providing tools, knowledge and opportunities to strengthen women's groups as organisations that defend and promote their human rights. **Visit:** [fcmujeres.org/en/home.html](http://fcmujeres.org/en/home.html)

**Equality Now** is an organisation that advocates for the human rights of women and girls around the world by raising international

visibility of individual cases of abuse. They mobilise public support and use political pressure to encourage governments to enforce laws and policies that uphold the rights of women and girls. **For further resources, visit:** [equalitynow.org/resources](http://equalitynow.org/resources)

**The Fawcett Society**, established in 1866 by suffragist Millicent Fawcett, is a leading UK charity championing women's rights at home, at work and in public life. As well as pooling resources on gender discrimination in the UK, the organisation has published a number of reports and briefing papers on women's representation in governance, equal pay and the disproportionate impact of the economic crisis on women's lives. **For more information, visit:** [fawcettsociety.org.uk](http://fawcettsociety.org.uk)

**FRIDA: The Young Feminist Fund** is an initiative that funds and strengthens the participation and leadership of young feminist activists globally. The fund is a collaborative effort between the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), The Central American Women's Fund (FCAM) and young feminist activists from different regions of the world. **View their grants programme here:** [youngfeministfund.org](http://youngfeministfund.org)

**The Global Fund for Women** is a non-profit grant-making foundation that advances women's human rights worldwide. They have supported more than 4,700 women's rights organisations in over 175 countries, with funding from over 20,000 individuals and institutions. **For information on funding opportunities, visit:** [globalfundforwomen.org](http://globalfundforwomen.org)

**Global Girl Media** is a non-profit organisation dedicated to empowering high-school age girls from under-served communities around the world to have a voice in the global media universe, through media, leadership and journalistic training. **For more information, visit:** [globalgirlmedia.org](http://globalgirlmedia.org)

**Ipas** is an organisation focused on increasing women's ability to assert their sexual and reproductive rights. It works in several areas, focusing on sexual violence and youth,



including advocacy, community engagement, research and training health workers in clinical and counselling skills for comprehensive abortion care. **For more information, visit:** [ipas.org/en.aspx](http://ipas.org/en.aspx)

**KOFAVIV** is a network of women and men who are dedicated to helping victims of sexual violence. They connect victims to healthcare, legal representation and the community – giving them a voice and path to justice in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. **See:** [kofaviv.blogspot.co.uk](http://kofaviv.blogspot.co.uk)

**Mama Cash** supports innovative women's initiatives worldwide with the belief that social change starts with women and girls. Since 1983, Mama Cash has awarded over €37 million to advance women's and girls' human rights, working in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean and Commonwealth Independent States. **For more information, see:** [mamacash.org](http://mamacash.org)

**The Population Council** is an international non-governmental organisation conducting research into population issues worldwide. Their three main research areas include HIV and Aids; Poverty, Gender and Youth; and Reproductive Health. Through research in more than 50 countries, The Population Council works with partners to deliver solutions that lead to more effective policies, programmes and technologies. Their publications and resources **can be found here:** [popcouncil.org/research](http://popcouncil.org/research)

**Vital Voices** is a global partnership that aims to empower women worldwide. Working in partnership with senior government, corporate and NGO executives, Vital Voices aims to train women leaders and entrepreneurs around the world who can then mentor women in their own communities, and build a network of inspirational women. **For more information, visit:** [vitalvoices.org](http://vitalvoices.org)

**Women for Women International** is a global NGO that works with socially excluded women survivors of conflict, by providing them with financial aid, job training, rights awareness and leadership education. To learn more about the programmes and projects they run, **visit:** [womenforwomen.org](http://womenforwomen.org)



**Womankind Worldwide** aims to promote women as a force for change in development. It works in 15 developing countries, partnering with women's rights organisations to fund projects tied to women's legal rights, healthcare and self-empowerment. **Visit the website at:** [womankind.org.uk](http://womankind.org.uk)

## Campaigns

**10x10** channels film and social action to increase investment in girls, driving resources to girl-focused programmes by penetrating the public consciousness and creating a vast grassroots network. In March 2013, 10x10 launched 'Girl Rising', a feature film following nine girls in nine countries, demonstrating the power and strength of girls' education. **Find out more about their film and work here:** [10x10act.org](http://10x10act.org) **For more information on 'Girl Rising', visit:** [girlrising.com](http://girlrising.com)

**Stop Violence against Girls in School** is ActionAid's multi-country initiative working to address violence against girls in schools within Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique. The campaign aims to reduce violence against girls in schools by shaping policies and laws and ultimately empowering girls to challenge the culture of violence in and around schools, and increase girls' enrolment. General information on the Stop Violence Against Girls in School project can be **found at:** [actionaid.org/what-we-do/education/stop-violence-against-girls-schools](http://actionaid.org/what-we-do/education/stop-violence-against-girls-schools)

**The Everyday Sexism Project**, founded only in 2012, now runs across 19 countries, providing an online platform for women to

catalogue instances of sexism they encounter in their everyday lives. **To view entries, or to contribute, visit:** [everydaysexism.com](http://everydaysexism.com)







**Feministing** is an online community for feminists and their allies. The website is contributed to by young feminist advocates all around the world, and uses popular culture and humour as a way of raising consciousness around women's rights. **To read or contribute, visit:** [feministing.com](http://feministing.com)

**The Girl Effect** is a shared initiative by the Nike Foundation and the NoVo Foundation to create opportunities for girls. The 'girl effect' shows how a girl's empowerment can impact the girl, her community and humanity at large; it also provides tools and information for private sector actors, NGOs, governments and policy makers on how to empower girls. **Visit the Girl Effect at:** [girl effect.org](http://girl effect.org)

**Girl Up** is the United Nations Foundation awareness-raising campaign to harness girls' energy and enthusiasm as a powerful force for change. The campaign aims to foster the opportunity for girls to become educated, healthy, safe and in a position to be the next generation of leaders. **See:** [girlup.org](http://girlup.org)

**Hollaback** is an international movement against street harassment. It networks women all over the world, allowing them to document their experiences of harassment via blogs based in cities across 26 countries. **For more information, visit:** [ihollaback.org](http://ihollaback.org)

**MenCare** is a global fatherhood campaign promoting men's involvement as equitable, non-violent fathers and caregivers. They take a multi-pronged approach to changing attitudes, working both on the ground with local fathers' groups, and internationally through media campaigns, to challenge the notion that care work should be the sole domain of women. **For information and downloadable resources, visit:** [men-care.org](http://men-care.org)

**Plan International: 'Because I am a Girl' Campaign** aims to help millions of girls to secure the skills, education and support they need to transform their lives and the world around them. Plan International believe supporting girls' education is one of the best investments we can make to help end poverty. **To 'raise your hand' in support of girls' rights, visit:** [plan-international.org/girls/](http://plan-international.org/girls/)

**The Representation Project** was established following the success of Jennifer Siebel Newsom's film 'Miss Representation', which took a critical look at gender stereotypes and women's representation across a spectrum of media. The Project aims to carry on the legacy of Newsom's film, by using media content to expose wider gender injustices. **For details on the project, visit:** [therepresentationproject.org](http://therepresentationproject.org)

**The White Ribbon Campaign** is a movement organised, aimed at and run by men, active in over 60 countries. The movement encourages men to wear a white ribbon as a symbol that they will never commit, condone or remain silent about Violence against Women. They also organise a wide range of educational activities.

**Information about their ongoing activities can be found at:** [whiteribbon.ca](http://whiteribbon.ca)



## Coalitions

**Adolescent Girls Advocacy and Leadership Initiative (AGALI)** is a partnership initiative implemented by the International Health Programs of the Public Health Institute. It intends to strengthen advocacy efforts and leadership capacity to improve the economic circumstances and educational opportunities for adolescent girls and young women in Latin America and Africa. AGALI's partners have provided direct training and services to over 40,000 adolescent girls and their allies, in addition to engaging 600 grassroots organisations in girl-centred advocacy efforts. **See:** [agaliprogram.org](http://agaliprogram.org)

**A Safe World for Women** is a woman-led not-for-profit organisation working with grassroots groups to promote the rights of women and children. The organisation aims to provide a platform for global interaction as well as a news outlet documenting the rights of and violence against women and children. A Safe World for Women acts as a valuable resource for academics, researchers and the global community.

**Visit:** [asafeworldforwomen.org](http://asafeworldforwomen.org)

**Gender at Work** is an international collaborative that strengthens organisations to build cultures of equality and social justice, with a particular focus on gender. They have produced a number of publications on transforming gender hierarchies, including Rao and Kellner's seminal framework for analysing gender equality within institutions.

**For more information, visit:**  
[genderatwork.org](http://genderatwork.org)

**The Inter-Parliamentary Union** is an international organisation of parliaments established 1889. The union has been vocal on the importance of increasing women in parliaments, stating that true democracy is only possible with equal representation. As well as regular publications on the importance of gender equity in politics, the IPU is behind 'The Quota Project', a website that documents which international parliaments and parties have quotas for women's representation, as well as featuring a bank of global gender resources. **To view the Quota Project, visit:** [quotaproject.org](http://quotaproject.org)

**NGO Working Group on Girls' Rights** is an international network which aims to promote the human rights of girls at all stages of their youth, advance their inclusion and status as agents of change, as well as assisting girls to reach their full potential. **More information can be found at:** [girlsrights.org](http://girlsrights.org)

## Youth movements

**Advocates for Youth** host a Youth Activist Network (YAN) of more than 75,000 global young activists. Their online home, AMPLIFY, provides a space for awareness-raising in the form of regular blogs and online campaigns on the matters of

reproductive rights, sexual health and LGBTQ Issues. **For more information, visit:**  
[amplifyyourvoice.org](http://amplifyyourvoice.org)

**Oxfam International Youth Partnerships (OIYP)** is a global network of young people who share a vision of a just world and are committed to working for peaceful, equitable and sustainable social change within their communities. Every three years, the programme introduces another 300 young men and women, aged 18 to 25, from around the world to the OIYP network. Since the programme began in 2000, OIYP has worked with over 1,150 young people from 98 countries. **For resources on gender and justice, see:**  
[oiyp.oxfam.org.au/resources/](http://oiyp.oxfam.org.au/resources/)

**World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts** works worldwide to provide a non-formal education through which girls can gain life skills and self-development. It reaches approximately 10 million girls through 145 member organisations. The association has developed the 'Voices against Violence' curriculum, in partnership with UN Women, aimed at addressing the issue of violence against women and girls amongst its young members. **For more information, visit:**  
[wagggsworld.org/en/home](http://wagggsworld.org/en/home)



**The Young Women's Christian Association** is a global network empowering women around the world to enact social and economic change. It works with 25 million women and girls in 22,000 communities. YWCA has four priority areas: peace with justice; human rights; women's health and HIV/AIDS; and sustainable development. **For information, visit:** [worldywca.org](http://worldywca.org)

## Foundations

**The Cherie Blair Foundation** works to provide entrepreneurship opportunities and access to technology for women worldwide. It provides finance, networking and business development support on the premise that economically empowered women

not only have greater control over their own lives and the lives of their children, but also signal a brighter future for their communities and economies.

**See:** [cherieblairfoundation.org](http://cherieblairfoundation.org)

**Ford Foundation** aims to encourage a collaborative approach among non-profit organisations, governments and the business sector, ensure participation by men and women from diverse communities and work with those closest to where problems are located. The Ford Foundation works by making grants or loans that build knowledge and strengthen organisations and networks. **For more information, visit:** [fordfoundation.org](http://fordfoundation.org)

**UN Foundation** The Foundation's Women and Population section has been working to empower women and girls worldwide, on the premise that they are essential to eradicating poverty and achieving social justice. They place a particular focus on reproductive and sexual health, gender-based violence, and increasing funding available for adolescent girl-focused programming. **More information can be found at:** [unfoundation.org](http://unfoundation.org)

## Partnerships

**The Coalition for Adolescent Girls** acts as a platform for more than 30 international organisations working to improve the lives of adolescent girls in the developing world who are trapped in cycles of poverty. The Coalition provides a unique platform for organisations to share information, tools and resources; to find points of intersection and opportunities for collaboration, build technical capacity and to strategise on best practices. **Check out:** [coalitionforadolescentgirls.org](http://coalitionforadolescentgirls.org)

**Girl Hub** is a collaboration between the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) and Nike Foundation. Girl Hub aims to form a global network of girls' experts and advocates and link them with development programmes and policy makers to promote girls' rights. **For further information, visit:** [girlhub.girleffect.org](http://girlhub.girleffect.org)

**Girls Not Brides** is a global partnership between non-governmental organisations committed to ending child marriage and enabling girls to reach their full potential.

**Visit:** [girlsnotbrides.org](http://girlsnotbrides.org)



### The Global Business Coalition for Education (GBC-Ed)

brings together corporate leaders committed to delivering quality education to all of the world's children. Led by Gordon and Sarah Brown, GBC-Ed supports international action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on education by collaboratively working with government and other stakeholders. Their three core functions include cooperation, advocacy and research. **Find out more here:** [gbc-education.org](http://gbc-education.org)

**The Global Partnership for Education** is the only multilateral partnership devoted to securing a quality education for all children, prioritising the poorest and most vulnerable. Their partners include teachers, multilateral institutions, civil society organisations, NGOs and private foundations, and almost 60 low-income countries are currently members. **A full description of their work can be found at:** [globalpartnership.org](http://globalpartnership.org)



**International Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)** is a worldwide federation of organisations committed to improving the rights of LGBTI persons. They publish regular resources on LGBTI health and wellbeing, as well as supporting programmes and protest actions to garner public and government support for eradicating discrimination against LGBTI people. **For more information, visit:** [ilga.org](http://ilga.org)

**A World at School** is led by Gordon and Sarah Brown and intends to raise awareness and advocate the right of a quality education for all children. They recognise the need to amplify current efforts, support and collaborate with other organisations and highlight successes in order to achieve education targets within the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). **Visit:** [aworldatschool.org](http://aworldatschool.org)

**World Bank Adolescent Girls Initiative** was launched in 2008, as part of the World Bank Group's Gender Action Plan. The initiative aims to improve girls' employment prospects tomorrow with training and education today. It works in partnership with the governments of Australia, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and private sector firms including Cisco, Standard Chartered Bank and Goldman Sachs. The programme is being piloted in eight low-income countries, including Haiti, Nepal and Afghanistan. **See:** [go.worldbank.org/I5PX4JETM0](http://go.worldbank.org/I5PX4JETM0)

## INGOs

**Action Aid** is an organisation working towards a world without poverty. They work in a range of areas: hunger, education, emergencies and conflict, women's rights and HIV and AIDS. **For details on their current girl-focused campaign 'She Can', visit:** [actionaid.org.uk/she-can](http://actionaid.org.uk/she-can)

**Oxfam International** is a confederation of 17 independent national organisations working in more than 90 countries. They are active across a wide range of areas, providing emergency provisions, implementing development programmes, and campaigning to end global poverty and injustice. **To see a full overview of Oxfam's work, visit:** [oxfam.org](http://oxfam.org)

**Progressio** is an international charity with over 70 years' experience in development. Their work is concentrated in three areas critical to tackling poverty, participation and effective governance, sustainable environment and HIV, with a special focus on improving the rights and access to power of poor and marginalised women. **For more information visit:** [progressio.org.uk](http://progressio.org.uk)

## Research

**Asia Pacific Women's Watch** is a regional network of women's organisations. It works to improve women's rights by working with other NGOs, national governments and the UN.

**More information can be found at:**

[apww-slwngef.org](http://apww-slwngef.org)

**Child Rights Information Network (CRIN)** is a global network of children's organisations which coordinates and promotes information on child rights. It has a membership of 2,000 organisations, and its search facilities can be narrowed down by region or theme with extensive information concerning children's legal rights. **For more information concerning child rights mechanisms, see:** [crin.org/docs/CRINmechs.pdf](http://crin.org/docs/CRINmechs.pdf)

**The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media** is a global research series of reports focused on adolescent girls' empowerment. Reports released in 2012 include 'Start with a Girl: A New Agenda for Global Health', 'Girls Speak: A New Voice in Global Development' and 'Girls Grow: A Vital Force in Rural Economies'. The reports are produced by the Coalition for Adolescent Girls. **To learn more about the report series, visit:** [coalitionforadolescentgirls.org](http://coalitionforadolescentgirls.org)



**International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)** is an organisation which works on research, technical support for capacity building and advocacy. Its research focus includes: adolescence, economic development, reproductive health and violence against women. Regarding adolescent girls, it works towards improving sexual and reproductive rights, combating child marriage and improving access to education. **Its many publications on these subjects can be found at:** [icrw.org/publications](http://icrw.org/publications)

**The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap** report is an annual report that provides a framework for measuring gender



disparities around the world. The report focuses on highlighting gaps in economic, political, educational and health-based rights and provisions for women, creating a ranking of countries to demonstrate where things still need to change. **To see the latest Gender Gap report, visit:** [weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap](http://weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap)

**Young Lives** is an international longitudinal study of childhood poverty, following 12,000 children in Peru, India, Vietnam and Ethiopia over 15 years. These areas were chosen specifically because of their common issues, including debt burden, post-conflict reconstruction and environmental conditions such as flooding and drought. Young Lives is a collaborative research project funded by the Department for International Development (UKAID) and coordinated by the University of Oxford in collaboration with research and policy partners in the four countries. **For more information on Young Lives, take a look at:** [younglives.org.uk](http://younglives.org.uk)

## Resources and Databases

**BRIDGE**, who are located within the Institute of Development Studies, produce and disseminate resources on gender equality in the global domain, with an aim to bridging the gap between gender theory and practice. Their recent publications, along with a list of global gender resources, **can be found at:** [bridge.ids.ac.uk](http://bridge.ids.ac.uk)

**Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children** produces action-oriented research in order to support local, national and international communities in their work against violence against women and children. The Centre's research and publications can be **found here:** [learningtoendabuse.ca/our-work/publications](http://learningtoendabuse.ca/our-work/publications)

**Girls Discovered** is a comprehensive, interactive resource of data relating to the welfare, health, education and opportunities of girls worldwide. It enables users to choose from over 200 datasets and view, compare and analyse their data on maps or download it as a spreadsheet. **Visit:** [girlsdiscovered.org/create\\_your\\_own\\_map/](http://girlsdiscovered.org/create_your_own_map/)

**Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB)** represents a tool for researchers and policy makers to determine and analyse obstacles to women's economic development. It covers a total of 160 countries and comprises an array of 60 indicators on gender discrimination. **For more information, visit:** [bit.ly/12aQbyq](http://bit.ly/12aQbyq) Another of their projects is the SIGI (Social Institutions and Gender Index), a composite measure of gender discrimination based on social institutions in over 100 non-OECD countries. Users may build their own gender index by changing the priority of the social institutions in the SIGI. **See:** [genderindex.org](http://genderindex.org)

**The Sexual Violence Research Initiative** aims to promote and generate research on sexual violence, to make sure the issue is recognised as a priority public health issue. As well as holding international conferences that bring together researchers, policy makers, activists and funders, and commissioning and managing a broad spectrum of research projects, they maintain a large database of research on sexual violence and related subjects, which can be found at: <http://www.svri.org/>

**Who Makes the News?** is a knowledge, information and resource portal on gender and the media. It is run by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), and hosts the Global Media Monitoring Project, a research and advocacy initiative aimed at challenging gendered disparities both in news reporting and within news outlets. **More information can be found at:** [whomakesthenews.org](http://whomakesthenews.org)

**Wikigender** is a pilot project initiated by the OECD, which is dedicated to indexing and sharing terms and information on gender issues, including girls' empowerment. The project aims to highlight the importance of social institutions such as norms, traditions and cultural practices that impact on women's empowerment. **For more information, visit:** [wikigender.org/index.php/New\\_Home](http://wikigender.org/index.php/New_Home)





**Young Feminist Wire** is an online platform created in 2010 by the Association for Women's Rights in Development. The site offers the opportunity for young women working on gender rights and equality to connect, learn and share resources to enhance their effectiveness. **Take a look at:** [yfa.awid.org](http://yfa.awid.org)

## UN Initiatives

**Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** is an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of 30 Articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

**See:** [un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/](http://un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/)

**End Poverty 2015: The United Nations Millennium Campaign** aims to support and promote awareness of the MDGs. The campaign produces publications which summarise the data and achievements of the MDGs so far, and there is a specific section dedicated to their gender/women's empowerment publications. **Information can be found at:** [endpoverty2015.org](http://endpoverty2015.org)

**Stop Rape Now** is a UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict uniting the work of 13 UN entities with the goal of ending sexual violence in conflict. It aims to improve coordination and accountability, amplify programming and advocacy, and support national efforts to prevent sexual violence and respond effectively to the needs of survivors. **For more information, visit:** [stoprapenow.org](http://stoprapenow.org)

**UN Programme on Youth** is the UN's focus centre on youth. It produces a biannual World Youth Report. One of its areas of concern is girls and young women. **Information regarding its work on girls and young women can be found at:** [undesadspd.org/Youth.aspx](http://undesadspd.org/Youth.aspx)

**Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence Against Women and Girls** is presented by UN Women and acts as a one-stop online centre which encourages and supports evidence-based programming to more efficiently and effectively design, implement, monitor and evaluate initiatives to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. The website provides step-by-step programming guidance and expert advice, including working with men and boys in 60 different languages, ensuring timely access to current information. **For more information, see:** [endvawnow.org](http://endvawnow.org)

**Women Watch** was first established as a joint UN project in 1997 to provide an internet space for global gender equality issues and to support implementation of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. It is now managed by a taskforce of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, led by UN Women, and acts as a central gateway to information and resources on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the United Nations system. **For more information, visit:** [un.org/womenwatch](http://un.org/womenwatch)  
The girl child is one of its critical areas of concern; **further information can be found at:** [un.org/womenwatch/directory/the\\_girl\\_child\\_3012.htm](http://un.org/womenwatch/directory/the_girl_child_3012.htm)

## UN Agencies

**UN Commission on the Status of Women** is a commission of the Economic and Social Council dedicated to gender equality and the advancement of women. The 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 4-15 March 2013. The priority theme was the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. **Details are available from:** [un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/](http://un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/)

**UN Women (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women)** was created to accelerate the UN goals on gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, the empowerment



of women, and equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. In addition, UN Women holds the entire UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of systemwide progress. **For more information, see:** [unwomen.org](http://unwomen.org)

**UN Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) on Adolescent Girls** was established in 2007 to support the UN's work with governments and partners in their efforts to develop policies and programmes to reach adolescent girls. **For publications on gender issues and women's empowerment, see:** [unesco.org/new/en/unesco/themes/gender-equality/resources/publications/](http://unesco.org/new/en/unesco/themes/gender-equality/resources/publications/)

**United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** focuses on child development, education and gender equality, HIV/AIDS, child protection and policy advocacy. **Of particular interest to girls** is the 2007 'State of the World's Children' Report – 'Women and Children: the Double Dividend of Gender Equality'; the 2009 report: 'Maternal and Newborn Health'; the 2010 report 'Child Rights'; the 2011 report 'Adolescence – An Age of Opportunity'; and the 2012 report 'Children in an Urban World'. **You can access all of these publications here:** [unicef.org/sowc/](http://unicef.org/sowc/)

**United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** is the UN's development organisation and works on the ground in 166 countries. Its yearly Human Development Report monitors development at national, regional and international levels, and can be found at: [hdr.undp.org/en/reports/](http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/) Of particular interest: its Human

Development Index (HDI) measures a country's development by considering education, life expectancy and income, but it also produces indices specific to gender in the Gender Inequality Index, which can be found at: [hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/gii](http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/gii)

**United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI)** aims to ensure that by 2015 the gender gap in primary and secondary education will have narrowed and all children complete primary education. Its 'Gender Achievement and Prospects' in Education (GAP) projects work to assess progress towards MDG 2 (universal primary education by 2015) and identify obstacles and innovations. The GAP Report can be found at: [ungei.org/gap/](http://ungei.org/gap/)

**United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** uses population data to ensure that every man, woman and child has the right to a healthy life. It produces a yearly 'State of the World's Population' report, several of which have focused on gender. Further information on adolescent girls is available from: [unfpa.org/public/home/adolescents/pid/6485](http://unfpa.org/public/home/adolescents/pid/6485)

**World Health Organisation (WHO)** coordinates health within the United Nations. The organisation is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, providing technical support, evidence-based policy options and assessing health trends. **For information on their work on gender, visit:** [who.int/gender/en/](http://who.int/gender/en/)





*Playing football  
in Brazil.*





# Glossary

## **Child Marriage/Early and Forced**

**Marriage:** 'Child marriage' is often used interchangeably with other terms, including 'early and forced marriage' and 'child and forced marriage'. These terms are often used to emphasise the fact that children are not considered able – due to their age – to give their free, full and informed consent to marriage, and are often subject to marriage under coercion, duress and even violence. The minimum age of 18 is considered under international human rights law as appropriate to ensure that children are able to give their free and full consent to marry. Marriage is a formalised, binding partnership between consenting adults. Child marriage, on the other hand, is any form of marriage, whether under civil, religious or customary law, where either one or both spouses are under 18 years old.<sup>1</sup>

**Child Protection:** Refers to the prevention of and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children.<sup>2</sup>

## **Conditional Cash Transfer Programmes**

**(CCTs):** These are programmes which provide money to families, subject to their fulfilment of specific behaviour requirements. These requirements may include ensuring their children attend school regularly, or utilising preventative nutrition and healthcare services, such as vaccination programmes.<sup>3</sup>

## **Convention on the Rights of the Child**

**(CRC):** The first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights – civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights – for children. Adopted in 1989, the Convention sets out these rights in 54 Articles and two Optional Protocols. It spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child.<sup>4</sup>

**Domestic work:** Generally speaking, domestic work is defined as work that takes place in the household, although much national labour legislation does not define domestic work.<sup>5</sup> According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), domestic work includes two broad categories of worker – those carrying out housekeeping, including cooks, and those carrying out personal care, including childcare workers and home-based care workers.<sup>6</sup>

**Edutainment:** Edutainment refers to the use of drama and entertainment for educational purposes. Most commonly, edutainment is created by integrating instructive or best practices into a fictional narrative – such as that of a radio drama or television series – to create a programme that communicates to its audience how they can tackle a specific issue – such as protecting themselves against HIV.<sup>7</sup>

**Empowerment:** Power is the ability to shape one's life and environment. The lack of power is one of the main barriers that prevent girls and women from realising their rights and escaping cycles of poverty. This can be overcome by a strategy of empowerment. Gender-based empowerment involves building girls' assets (social, economic, political and personal), strengthening girls' ability to make choices about their future, and developing girls' sense of self-worth and agency.<sup>8</sup>

**Female genital mutilation (FGM):** Is defined as all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-therapeutic reasons.<sup>9</sup>

**Feminist movements:** Movements that align themselves with feminism as a political ideology and seek to challenge inequalities and injustices between women and men, framing these as a challenge to patriarchy and patriarchal power relations. Feminist movements have historically been built and constituted by women, although men and trans individuals also align themselves with the politics of feminism.<sup>10</sup>

**Formal Learning:** Is always organised and structured, and has learning objectives. From the learner's standpoint, it is always intentional. Typical examples are learning that takes place within a training system or formal education institution. **Informal learning,** however, is never organised, has no set learning outcomes and is never intentional from the learner's standpoint. Often it is referred to as learning by experience or just as experience.<sup>11</sup>

**Informal Economy:** The term 'informal economy' refers to all economic activities by workers and economic units that are not covered by law, or activities that occur within the formal reach of the law, where that law is not applied or enforced. This term is preferable to 'informal sector', as the workers and enterprises included in this definition do not constitute one sector, but rather cut across many different sectors.<sup>12</sup>

**Gender:** The concept of gender refers to the norms, expectations and beliefs about the roles, relations and values attributed to girls and boys, women and men. These norms are socially constructed; they are neither invariable nor are they biologically determined. They change over time. They are learned from families and friends, in schools and communities, and from the media, government and religious organisations.<sup>13</sup>

**Gender Discrimination:** Describes the situation in which people are treated differently simply because they are male or female, rather than on the basis of their individual skills or capabilities. For example, social exclusion, inability to participate in decision-making processes, and restricted access to and control of services and resources are common results of discrimination. When this discrimination is part of the social order, it is called systemic gender discrimination; for instance, in some communities, families routinely choose to provide education for their sons but keep their daughters at home to help with domestic work.<sup>14</sup>

**Gender Equality:** Means that women and men, girls and boys enjoy the same status in society; have the same entitlements to all

human rights; enjoy the same level of respect in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices. Gender equality does not mean that women and men, or girls and boys, are the same, since they have different but related needs and priorities. Generally, their relative positions in society are based on standards that, while not fixed, tend to disadvantage women and girls. Promoting gender equality means transforming the power relations between women and men, girls and boys in order to create a more just society for all.<sup>15</sup>

**Gender Equity:** Means being fair to women and men, girls and boys. To ensure fairness, measures are put into place to address social or historical discrimination and disadvantages faced by girls relative to boys. A gender equity approach ensures equitable access to, and control of, the resources and benefits of development through targeted measures, although increased gender equity is only one part of a strategy that contributes to gender equality.<sup>16</sup>

**Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** Refers to physical, sexual, psychological and sometimes economic violence inflicted on a person because of being male or female. Girls and women are most frequently the targets of GBV, but it also affects boys and men, especially those who do not fit dominant male stereotypes of behaviour or appearance. GBV may refer to criminal acts of aggression committed by individuals, or to socially sanctioned violence committed by State authorities; and it encompasses, though is not limited to, domestic violence, trafficking of girls or boys or violence against men who have sex with men.<sup>17</sup>

**Gender-Blind:** An approach which lacks consideration of gender in projects, programmes or policy. It does not recognise gender as a determinant of social outcomes which impacts on policies and projects.<sup>18</sup> It does not consider differences between girls and boys, women and men.<sup>19</sup>

**Gender Justice:** Refers to the ending of inequalities between women and men that

result in women and girls' subordination to men and boys, in both the informal and formal sectors.<sup>20</sup> It implies that girls and boys, men and women have equal access to and control over resources, the ability to make choices in their lives, as well as access to provisions to redress inequalities, as needed. A commitment to gender justice means taking a position against gender discrimination, exclusion and gender-based violence.<sup>21</sup>

**Gender Power Relations:** Hierarchical relations of power between women and men that tend to disadvantage women. These gender hierarchies are often accepted as 'natural' but are socially determined relations which are culturally grounded and subject to change over time. They can be seen in a range of gendered practices, such as the division of labour and resources; and gender ideologies, such as ideas of acceptable behaviour for women and men.<sup>22</sup>

**Gender Mainstreaming:** Is the promotion of gender equality into all aspects of an organisation's work and into its systems and procedures. It is a process that addresses what an organisation does (external mainstreaming) and how an organisation works (internal mainstreaming). Gender mainstreaming means that all policies and programmes, as well as organisational and management processes, are designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated taking into account the different and relative needs and constraints of girls, boys, women and men.<sup>23</sup>

**Gender Norms:** Socially constructed beliefs regarding men's and women's behaviour which are 'assigned' in accordance with their biological sex. These norms govern our actions and choices and may lead to gender stereotyping.<sup>24</sup>

**Gender Sensitivity:** Recognising gender issues and women's different perceptions and interests which arise from different social positioning and gender roles.<sup>25</sup> A gender-sensitive practice acknowledges the different experiences, expectations, pressures, inequalities and needs of women,

men, transgender and intersex people. It also accounts for people's gender identity and sexual preferences, as well as numerous other factors that interact with gender to impact people's wellbeing.<sup>26</sup>

**Gender Stereotypes:** Are socially constructed and unquestioned beliefs about the different characteristics, roles and relations of women and men that are seen as true and unchangeable. Gender stereotypes are reproduced and re-enforced through processes such as the education and upbringing of girls and boys, as well as the influence of media.<sup>27</sup>

**Globalisation:** The Oxford English Dictionary defines globalisation as "The process by which businesses or other organisations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale".<sup>28</sup> In contemporary social theory, however, writers have expanded this definition to refer to and include the internationalisation of social processes as well. Modern discussion of globalisation conceives it as a process of deterritorialisation – where, through modern technologies, traditional physical boundaries and geographical borders no longer limit social space. Most theorists agree that globalisation is a long-term process, but one in which acceleration – of social activity, of the movement of people, capital and goods – is a key component.<sup>29</sup>

**Infant Mortality Rate:** The estimated number of infant deaths for every 1,000 live births.<sup>30</sup>

**Maternal Mortality Rate:** The number of maternal deaths in a given period per 100,000 women of reproductive age during the same time period.<sup>31</sup>

**Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):** Are eight international development goals that the member states of the United Nations – plus a number of international organisations – have agreed to achieve by the year 2015.<sup>32</sup> These goals range from eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, to promoting gender equality and empowering women.<sup>33</sup>

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation is the measurement and assessment of performance of a programme or project. Here, performance is defined as progress towards or achievement of results.<sup>34</sup>

**Non-Formal Education:** Organised and sustained educational activities that give access to structured learning and take place within and outside of educational institutions. Non-formal education can include basic education, life skills, work skills and general culture.<sup>35</sup>

**Patriarchy:** Refers to historical power imbalances and cultural practices and systems that confer power and offer men and boys more social and material benefits than women and girls.<sup>36</sup>

**Post-2015 Agenda:** In 2015, the Millennium Development goals will expire, and a new set of priorities will take their place.<sup>37</sup> This new set of international priorities and goals are referred to as the 'Post-2015 Agenda'. Part of this agenda will be the establishment of a set of global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will build upon the MDGs, and will be action-orientated and universally applicable, while taking into account different realities, capacities and levels of development across all member states.<sup>38</sup> The UN is now leading a process of open consultations with civil society organisations, think tanks, research institutions and stakeholders to develop the Post-2015 agenda.<sup>39</sup>

**Reproductive work:** Can refer to both unpaid care work plus giving birth, breastfeeding and child-rearing.<sup>40</sup> The term generally refers to work pertaining to taking care of the next generation – including maintaining the home, providing food and water, cooking, cleaning, caring for the sick and elderly, and bathing children.<sup>41</sup>

**Sex:** Refers to the biological characteristics that define humans as male or female. This should not be confused with gender, which is a social attribution. Sexual characteristics are biologically determined, and remain the same throughout time and across societies.<sup>42</sup>

**Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD):** Data which is collected by a person's sex

and age group. It can be gathered using qualitative and quantitative methods.<sup>43</sup>

**Sex Ratio at Birth:** The sex ratio at birth refers to the number of boys born alive per 100 girls born alive.<sup>44</sup> The normal global sex ratio at birth ranges from 102 to 106 males per 100 females. However, ratios much higher than this have been found, especially in countries with access to technologies that make it possible for families to determine the sex of their unborn child.<sup>45</sup>

**Sex-Selective Abortion:** These are incidents where a pregnancy is terminated on the basis of the unborn child's sex. These terminations are typically fuelled by a preference for sons, rather than daughters.<sup>46</sup>

**Sexual Violence:** Refers to any sexual act, effort to obtain a sexual act, unwelcome sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person irrespective of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.<sup>47</sup>

**Transactional Sex:** The exchange of goods or services, including cash, transport and accommodation, for sex.<sup>48</sup>

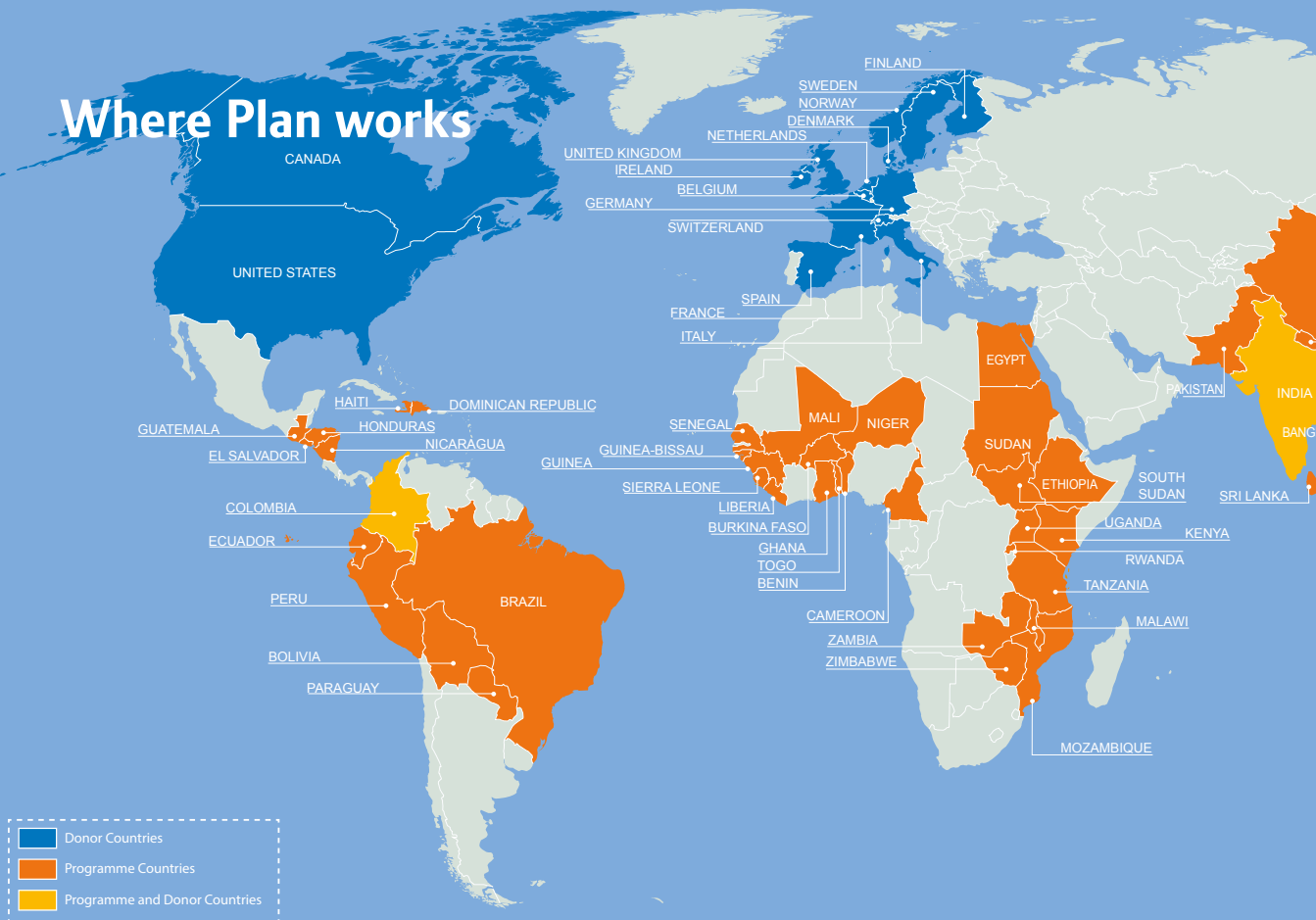
**Vocational Training:** Designed mainly to prepare pupils for entry into a particular occupation or trade (or class of occupations or trades).<sup>49</sup>

**Women's Civic and Political Participation:** Is women's ability to participate equally alongside men, in all aspects and at all levels of public and political life and decision-making.<sup>50</sup> Women's political participation is a fundamental to achieving both true gender equality and genuine democracy.<sup>51</sup>

**Women's Movements:** Are built and constituted by women and seek to challenge inequalities and injustice between women and men. Women's movements may have varying approaches to transforming gender power relations, from more conservative to more radical. Individuals and groups within women's movements may not always ally themselves with the political identity of 'feminism'.<sup>52</sup>



# Where Plan works



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# About Plan International



Plan is one of the oldest and largest international development organisations in the world. Founded in 1937 to provide relief to children caught up in the Spanish Civil War, we celebrated our 75th anniversary in 2012. We work in 71 countries: we have programmes in 50 low-mid income countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas and 21 national offices. Our national offices help raise awareness of our work and raise funds to support it. Plan works with more than 90,000 communities helping more than 165 million people, of whom 78 million are children. We make long-term commitments to children in poverty and help as many as possible, by working in partnerships and alliance with them, their families, communities, civil society and government. We build productive relationships enabling children's voices to be heard and recognised in issues that affect them. Plan is independent, with no religious, political or governmental affiliations.

**Plan has a vision:** a world in which all children realise their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity. Today, hundreds of millions of children remain without their rights. We believe this is totally unacceptable.

Plan's strategy to 2015 has one goal: to reach as many children as possible, particularly those who are excluded or marginalised, with high-quality programmes that will deliver long-lasting benefits. In the process of delivering this strategy, we are working towards becoming one Plan, a more effective, efficient and collaborative organisation.

[plan-international.org](http://plan-international.org)

*Uganda.*



PLAN/RICHARD WAINWRIGHT

“This generation may be the best equipped ever to make equality between the sexes a reality. Today, they have the power of a better education and of new and increasingly liberating communications tools. They also have the example of the generations ahead of them who have been fighting to achieve equal rights and equal power; with control over their lives, to make the choices they want and to lead a meaningful and happy life.

While millions of people, of both sexes, still struggle to achieve this state of affairs, the challenge remains much greater for girls and young women.”

**Alice Albright**

CEO, Global Partnership for Education

“You have to raise collective awareness... you have to communicate with other people, because a single person can’t change the world. An idea can, certainly, but you need other hands, other eyes, other voices to make it a stronger initiative.”

**Cecilia, Mexico**

### **The report series**

This is the eighth in the annual ‘Because I am a Girl’ report series, published by Plan, which assesses the current state of the world’s girls. While women and children are recognised in policy and planning, girls’ needs and rights are often ignored. The reports provide evidence, including the voices of girls themselves, as to why they need to be treated differently from boys and adult women. They also use information from primary research, in particular a small study set up in 2006 following 142 girls from nine countries. Past reports have covered education, conflict, economic empowerment, cities and technology, adolescent girls and disasters and how boys and young men can support gender equality. Plan is an international development agency and has been working with children and their communities in 50 countries worldwide for over 75 years.

[plan-international.org/girls](http://plan-international.org/girls)

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*Young woman  
from Timbuktu.*

PLAN/BETTINA BAUER