

Plan International UK

REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES: GIRLS CHALLENGING THE GENDER RULES

Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam

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ABBREVIATIONS

FGC/M	Female genital cutting/mutilation
GBV	Gender-based violence
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	South East Asia
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
VAW	Violence against women

SUMMARY

This latest report from the *Real Choices, Real Lives* Cohort study is the second in a series of three reports for 2019, focusing on the South East Asian countries – Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The first report, published in March 2019, focused on Sub-Saharan Africa (Benin, Togo, and Uganda), and the third report in the series will focus on Latin America and the Caribbean (Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador). The report looks in-depth at the responses of the 46 girls across the three South East Asian countries to the gender socialisation process which has surrounded them from birth. The analysis is based particularly on data from 2015 to 2018, when the girls moved from middle childhood into early adolescence. It draws substantially on detailed longitudinal case studies of three girls. These girls' stories were selected, not as representative examples, but because they provide more pronounced cases of 'pushback' and, through the girls' varied experiences, enable us to consider different potential influences.

The study identifies the strength of gendered expectations, but also that there is potential for gender norms to shift – with girls, and their families, questioning what is considered appropriate and beginning to do things differently, or aspiring to things being different. We see that there can be 'glitches' in the process of gender norm reproduction, and the report therefore looks closely at: how and why girls start to question the expectations they grow up with; and when and why they decide that "something different" is possible. Our analysis provides the girls foundation for considering whether they continue to hold this belief as they grow older. *Real Choices, Real Lives* is uniquely placed to track this as the girls continue to grow up and to use this information to both support girls' resistance and influence programming and policy within the international development community.



PLAN INTERNATIONAL CAMBODIA

Organising firewood in Cambodia, 2018

MAP 1: REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES COHORT STUDY MAP

Where the girls live



BENIN

Alice
Annabelle
Barbara
Catherine
Eleanor
Isabelle
Jacqueline
Layla

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Chantal
Dariana
Griselda
Katerin
Leyla
Madelin
Nicol
Raisa
Rebeca
Saidy
Sharina
Valerie
Ana L
Cara L
Oria M

EL SALVADOR

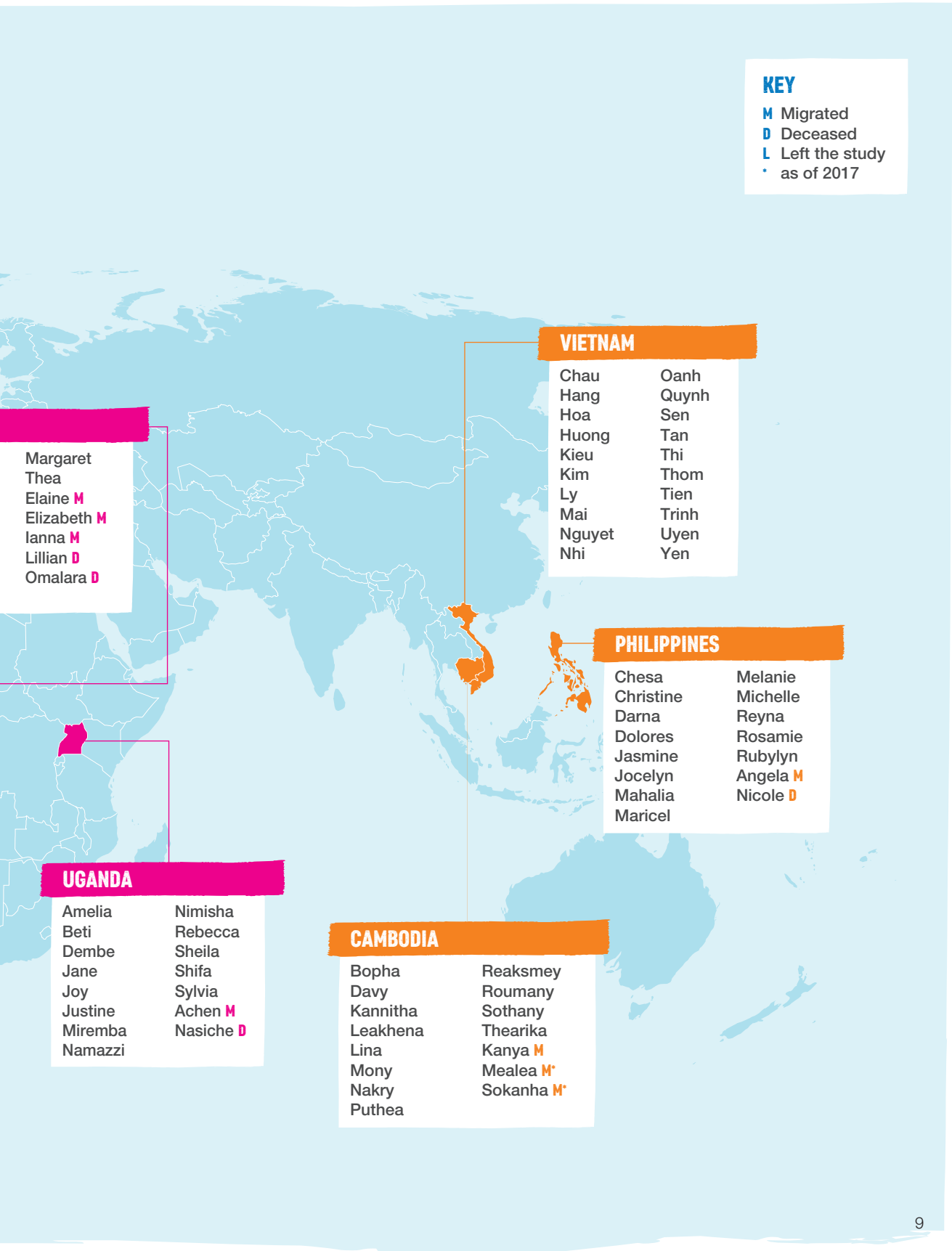
Andrea
Bessy
Doris
Gabriela
Gladys
Hillary
Karen
Mariel
Raquel
Rebecca P
Stephany
Susana
Valeria

TOGO

Ala-Woni
Anti
Anti-Yara
Ayomide
Azia
Djoumai
Essohana
Fezire
Folami
Ladi
Larba
Mangazia
Nana-Adja
Nini-Rike
Reine
Adjoa L
Iara L
Aria M
Dofi M
Esi M
Lelem M*
Melyah M
Omorose M
Tene M*
Aisosa D
Isoka D
Izegbe D

BRAZIL

Amanda
Bianca
Camila
Fernanda
Juliana
Larissa
Natália
Patrícia
Sofia
Tatiana
Beatriz L
Feliciana L
Luiza L
Valentina L
Catarina M
Elena M
Florencia M
Margarida M
Pietra M
Sancia M


KEY
M Migrated
D Deceased
L Left the study
• as of 2017
VIETNAM
Chau
Hang
Hoa
Huong
Kieu
Kim
Ly
Mai
Nguyet
Nhi
Oanh
Quynh
Sen
Tan
Thi
Thom
Tien
Trinh
Uyen
Yen
Margaret
Thea
Elaine M
Elizabeth M
Ianna M
Lillian D
Omalara D
PHILIPPINES
Chesa
Christine
Darna
Dolores
Jasmine
Jocelyn
Mahalia
Maricel
Melanie
Michelle
Reyna
Rosamie
Rubylyn
Angela M
Nicole D
UGANDA
Amelia
Beti
Dembe
Jane
Joy
Justine
Miremba
Namazzi
Nimisha
Rebecca
Sheila
Shifa
Sylvia
Achen M
Nasiche D
CAMBODIA
Bopha
Davy
Kannitha
Leakhena
Lina
Mony
Nakry
Puthea
Reaksmey
Roumany
Sothany
Thearika
Kanya M
Mealea M•
Sokanha M•

INTRODUCTION

Since 2007, Plan International UK has been tracking the lives of over 120 girls across nine countries in three regions (see Map 1).[1] Our qualitative longitudinal study, *Real Choices, Real Lives*, provides significant insights into the choices, decisions, and realities that shape girls' lives as they grow up in a gendered world (see Box 2 and Annex One). Given our position as an organisation promoting children's rights, with a focus on adolescent girls, the evidence from *Real Choices, Real Lives* is especially valuable for informing our gender transformative programming and policy work, as well as that of others in the field.[2] As such, evidence from the study is targeted at international development practitioners and policy makers, as well as the development research community.

In this report – the second in a series of regionally-focused reports – we look at the three South East Asian (SEA) countries that are part of *Real Choices, Real Lives*: Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Our first report looked in depth at Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)[5] and in the final report in the series to be published in 2019 we will turn our attention to the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) countries. The analysis and discussion of *where* and *when*, and *how* and *why* girls are challenging gendered expectations in SSA is already framing and informing our understanding in SEA. Once all three regionally-focused reports have been completed, we will be able to analyse and synthesise significant similarities and divergences across the study. However, to ensure that the same depth of analysis

Box 1 Human Development Index and Gender Inequality Index rankings

Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam are all ranked within the category of 'medium' countries on the Human Development Index (HDI), with the Philippines and Vietnam being close to each other, whilst Cambodia is ranked lower. The HDI measures a country's average development in relation to, for example, living standards, health, and education. In terms of the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which measures three aspects of human development (reproductive health, empowerment, and economic participation of women/girls in relation to men/boys), there is greater variation. Vietnam is ranked relatively high compared to the Philippines, and in particular compared to Cambodia.

Human Development Index[3]

Cambodia 146
The Philippines 113
Vietnam 116

Gender Inequality Index[4]

Cambodia 116
The Philippines 97
Vietnam 67

of the lives and experiences of the girls in the study is undertaken across all countries, our focus here is on the SEA girls without drawing direct comparisons with the observations from the SSA report. In that sense, the areas covered between the two reports are not directly the same – with the 'glitches' being drawn from what is observed in the SEA girls, rather than following the same areas observed in SSA.

We acknowledge the variation between the three SEA countries, highlighted for example in the GII rankings (see Box 1), with Vietnam ranked significantly higher (i.e. having better gender equality scores in key domains) than Cambodia in particular, but also compared to the Philippines. There is also variation between the contexts in which the girls live within the three countries – with the girls being located in two different provinces in each country, as well as being from households that reflect different socio-economic dynamics (see Annex Two for a snapshot of girls' households). However, by focusing on three countries within a region, and going deeper into the data, we are able to root our analysis within those contexts more thoroughly and consider commonalities, as well as differences, between the girls' experiences in greater detail.

Box 2 Background of the *Real Choices, Real Lives* study

Real Choices, Real Lives is a longitudinal study tracking the lives of a cohort of girls from when they were born (in 2006) until they turn 18 (in 2024). The study is undertaken in nine countries across SSA (Benin, Togo, Uganda), SEA (Cambodia, the Philippines, Vietnam) and LAC (Brazil, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador). In the three SEA countries there are a total of 46 girls (12 in Cambodia, 14 in the Philippines, and 20 in Vietnam).[6]

The methodology is based around a core approach which, from the beginning of the study, draws on in-depth interviews with caregivers and, since 2013, when they turned seven, with the girls themselves. Whilst our study primarily focuses on the girl and her immediate family, we also consider the wider context to inform our analysis. For example, we have undertaken life histories with parents and interviews with other household members. Over the years, we will look to strengthen this – as social networks become increasingly defined in the girls' lives.

Annex One provides further detail on the study design, sampling, ethics, and limitations as well as an overview of the data held for Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam specifically.

I. REPORT OVERVIEW

In previous reports, we have drawn from our breadth of qualitative data to explore the daily lives of the girls and their families and have observed the ways in which age, gender, and poverty interact, often negatively, in terms of girls' personal development and the opportunities available to them. In 2015, the study began to probe attitudes and behaviours relating to gendered norms, identifying characteristics of 'acceptors', 'consenters', and 'resisters' to these norms in the interviews with the girls and their family members. This current report looking at SEA data uses longitudinal analysis to explore these findings up to 2018,[7] when the Cohort girls turned 12. Upon entering early adolescence, the girls have begun to face new challenges and expectations, as well as opportunities, relating to gender. At the same time, among the international development community, interest in adolescence has increased significantly, including prominence in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[8] There is growing appreciation of the importance of this life stage, particularly from a gender equality perspective.

Gender socialisation, the process of males and females being raised to conform to an allocated gender role, begins from birth. However, different expectations about appropriate behaviour often intensify during adolescence and gender identities become stronger.[9,10] The onset of puberty brings "reinforcement of social expectations and pressures from family, peers, and society to conform to hegemonic sex-typed identities and roles".[11] It is now recognised that, contrary to previous beliefs, the gender socialisation process is not completed by adolescence[12] – which is increasingly seen instead as a critical transition point presenting new opportunities and constraints, as well as providing a key window of opportunity[13] for interventions in both policy and programming.[14] However, there is still relatively limited data on adolescence, especially early adolescence, in the development literature, particularly in comparison to data on under-five year olds and adults.[15] The paucity of evidence and "knowledge gaps around the determinants, mechanisms, experiences and outcomes of gender dynamics and discrimination in childhood"[16] undermine policy and programming effectiveness, in particular those aimed at transforming gender relations. With these knowledge gaps in mind, the arrival of adolescence for the Cohort girls marked a natural opportunity to take the exploration of the gender socialisation process a step further. While the outcomes of this socialisation have been observed in our previous reports,[17] here we focus on *where*, and *when* – and more significantly point to *how* and *why* – the girls demonstrate 'glitches' in the process of reproducing gender norms.

There is growing recognition of the need to address gendered social norms to support positive development outcomes, yet there remains a disconnect between theory and practice. This is partly because of the inherent challenges of both determining and measuring social norms[18] and of understanding why they change: "critical information if we are to design projects that hasten the process of change and build new norms".[19] Indeed, although there is evidence in the wider literature of 'disruption' of, or 'positive deviance' from, gender norms, this evidence, particularly where it draws from girls' own experiences rather than being linked to specific interventions, is limited.[20]

Our longitudinal analysis – grounded in in-depth case studies from Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam – highlights strong gendered expectations of behaviour across all three contexts, for example: **"Girls should be polite and walk appropriately"**

(Leakhana, Cambodia, 2017); **"[Girls should be] simple…[boys should be] powerful… because the teachers teach me that at school"** (Uyen, Vietnam, 2018); and **"Girls have chores because they're always at home; boys aren't always home and are always out"** (Dolores, Philippines, 2018). At the same time, there are examples of girls – and their families – who are noticing, questioning, or rejecting expectations around girls' behaviour and roles in different areas of their lives, with references to the concept of equality often strongly stated: **"I just feel that my elder brother should help do housework. I bet I can have more time to play and study if he help[ed] with housework"** (Davy, Cambodia, 2018); and **"There should be gender equality. We should not discriminate between boys and girls"** (Tan's mother, Vietnam, 2017). Such statements highlight the potential for expectations to be challenged, although – interestingly – in many cases where girls do describe instances of going against expectations of how they should behave, they do so in terms of describing themselves as being "like boys".

In the SEA report, we analyse the points of noticing, questioning, or rejecting gendered expectations – the 'glitches', or deviations – not as evidence of disruption or change of gendered social norms, but rather as markers of where there is potential for gender norm transformation if, and when, the broader social, economic, and political conditions align.[21] It is important to note that the case studies are not chosen to be representative of the wider Cohort data, but to illuminate the nuanced and complex interactions between the influences across the course of a girl's life – providing the basis to draw out commonalities and differences with other girls. This analysis, therefore, provides a valuable contribution to existing knowledge by enabling critical insight into considering the timing, duration, and scope of interventions that aim to bring about a transformation in gender inequality.

II. REPORT STRUCTURE

The report is structured into three main sections.

- The first section draws on the wider literature to conceptualise gender socialisation and provide a framework for understanding where 'glitches' occur and how they are influenced – including a summary of our SEA data.
- This sets the scene for in-depth analysis in the second section, drawing from a series of case studies from Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, and pulling together analysis across the SEA Cohort. The analysis considers both the types of 'glitches' in the process of gender norm reproduction as well as the potential influences – considering first what the 'norm' is as well as ways in which it is questioned.
- In the third section we present a summary and conclusions and some recommendations, built on our in-depth analysis, for future policy and programming responses, as well as for future research.

1 EXPLORING AND CONCEPTUALISING 'DISRUPTION' OF GENDERED SOCIAL NORMS

1.1 UNDERPINNING INEQUALITY: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDERED SOCIAL NORMS

Gendered social norms and stereotypes underpin and reproduce inequitable practices that ultimately result in girls and boys (and women and men) enjoying differential access to resources, as well as unequal opportunities and outcomes (see Box 3).[22] Conceptualisations of gender differ between contexts, often with roots in historical social structures and changes in the economy. For example, while Vietnam's relatively high gender equality rating and female employment is often attributed to its socialist history, the role of women in sustaining the household and being held accountable for the 'progress' of a family was emphasised by the socialist state and research today finds that women often defer to men in family decision making.[23] In the Philippines, pre-colonial concepts of gender, particularly in terms of gender transitive or non-conforming behaviour in men, were drastically impacted by the influence of the colonial Spanish 'machismo', which transformed the Tagalog word used to describe effeminate, non-conforming men (*'bakla'*) into a derogatory term synonymous with homosexuality.[24] In Cambodia, links have been made between high levels of intimate partner violence and the prevalence of attitudes that define 'masculinity' as men's social responsibility to provide for their family and to be dominant over women who in turn have their own 'duty' to the family[25] – gendered norms which are also regarded as having roots in the aftermath of Cambodia's Civil War.[26]

Misconceptions that 'gender' relates solely to issues concerning women and girls are being disproven by research looking deeper at how concepts of what it means to be 'feminine' and what it means to be 'masculine' affect social interactions and personal well-being at many different levels. For example, social concepts and expectations of what it means to be 'masculine' are increasingly regarded as one of the root causes of gender-based violence (GBV).[27] Gendered expectations of behaviour can also stunt the development of an individual's identity, forcing them to follow rules that determine which activities they can and cannot take part in, how they express themselves, and what they should look like.

Box 3 Definition of social norms and gender norms[28]

Social norms: *the 'informal rules of the game', influencing behaviour within any social group about what other people do (the typical behaviour) and what one should do (appropriate behaviour). Importantly, social norms carry social implications – i.e. rewards when followed and sanctions when not followed.*

Gender/gendered norms: *a socially constructed set of 'acceptable' feminine/masculine behaviours which individuals are taught to 'perform', usually according to their sex. Failure to 'perform' one's allocated gender carries consequences, whilst adherence is rewarded.*

1.2 GENDER SOCIALISATION AND INFLUENCING

Gender socialisation sees the reproduction of 'acceptable' feminine/masculine behaviours, or gendered social norms, via interaction between various individual, social and structural influences (see Figure 1).[29] Judith Butler, among others, argues that there can be 'slippage' in the reproduction of gendered social norms, wherein these 'acceptable' behaviours are exposed as social constructions – that is, made-up rules, subject to change – rather than being biological truths.[30]

Indeed, studies have shown that individuals behave differently when faced with the same set of expectations, sanctions and rewards.[31] This is dependent on individual, social and structural factors including:

- their own values and beliefs;
- their social status and family values; and
- the availability of resources and opportunities.[32]

These influences are often two-way, with structural changes affecting individual attitudes and behaviours, and individual-level changes also influencing wider social dynamics.[33] For example, whilst a household's economic circumstances or social status may influence whether they decide to send a girl to school or not, her attendance also relates to broader structural factors in terms of the policy context, and opportunities in terms of the availability of education and work.[34] The wider literature points to the importance of social institutions, networks and interactions to "change, usually subtly but sometimes more profoundly, [beliefs]…[as] individuals update their understanding of the norm, and of the costs and benefits of following or resisting the norm, through each meeting".[35] This is especially important given the life stage of the girls in the Cohort, as social interactions often broaden out towards adulthood, and family and parental influences become less significant.[36]

While there remain gaps in the understanding of why social norms fade or emerge, what can be observed highlights that they do not change 'cleanly', but often through contested processes which can be either slow or relatively rapid.[37] What people do in practice may change before the norm changes, and, at the same time, their beliefs and attitudes may change before their behaviour.[38] Borrowing from the sociology literature, the concept of 'resistance' can be both individual or collective, as well as spanning from proactive and overt opposition to questioning and objecting.[39] For example, it can involve speaking out or behaving symbolically in opposition to expectations, such as in choices of hairstyle or clothing. Social scientist James Scott asserted that, while "everyday forms of resistance rarely make headlines" they are significant given the resources available to those who are relatively powerless.[40]

Figure 1 Gender socialisation: spheres of influence in girls' lives





PLAN INTERNATIONAL VIETNAM

Discussing her social network in Vietnam, 2018

1.3 EXPLORING GENDER SOCIALISATION AND CHANGE IN REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES

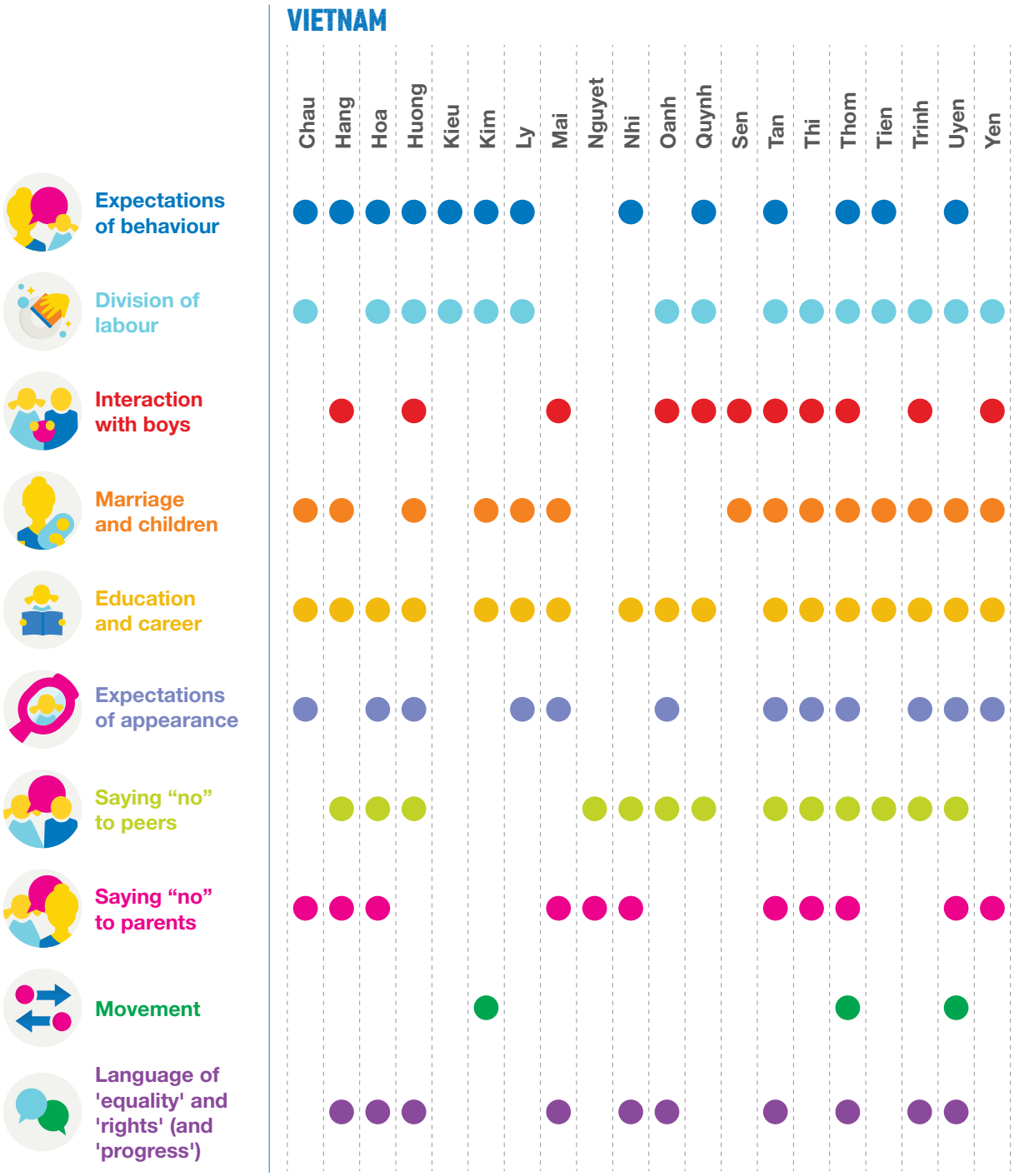
Drawing from the conceptualisation of the gender socialisation process, and its fluctuations, outlined in Section 1.2, analysis of the 2014-2018 SEA data identifies that, across the three countries, every girl demonstrated some type of 'glitch' in the reproduction of gendered social norms in one or more areas of her life. We observed these 'glitches' through discursive, attitudinal, and described behavioural changes[41] articulated by the girls in terms of expectations of their behaviour related, for example, to their appearance, or to their interactions with boys, as well as to their future roles – both in terms of marriage and of children (see Table 1).

Table 1 What is and is not captured in our data

Typology	What we observe in our data	
Discursive	**Identifying differences**	**"Boys do not have to do housework. They just go to play. They play skipping and football."** (Ly, Vietnam, 2014)
Attitudinal	**Verbal attitudes**	**"Men travel around, but women don't… I think it is not fair because women also want to travel around."** (Roumany, Cambodia, 2016)
Behavioural	**Described behaviours**	**"She doesn't tie her hair back and she also hangs out with boys."** (Chesa's mother, Philippines, 2016)

Typology	What is outside the scope of our data	
Behavioural	**Individual active behaviour**	Observed behavioural change on the Individual Level
Norm change	**Collective active behaviour**	Observed behavioural change beyond the Individual Level (family, social network, community etc.)

MAP 2: IDENTIFYING 'GLITCHES' ACROSS THE SOUTH EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES



THE PHILIPPINES

CAMBODIA

Our analysis also detects that for the girls in the three SEA Cohort study countries, whilst there is contextual variance in their relative importance, factors influencing 'glitches' in the gender socialisation process cut across the structural, social, and individual spheres. Table 2 provides a summary of the key influences observed – ranging from broader changes in terms of education policy, and rhetoric of rights and gender equality, through to the girl's personality and priorities. In the SEA context, we identify the significance of **Social Level** influences, with references to social expectations of appearance and social implications of not conforming, for example, being particularly significant. Considering the social dynamics is important given the widening of social networks in the Cohort girls' lives as they enter adolescence.

Table 2 Summarising multiple factors of influence

Structural level	**1** Socio-economic situation, changes in economy, and changes in male/female employment. **2** National and regional level policies and laws in terms of education, corporal punishment, gender equality, and rights rhetoric. **3** Representation of women in public life.
Social level	**1** Parent/carer attitudes and behaviours – the girl's most significant relationships and how they change; contrasting attitudes and behaviour of parents/carers. **2** The presence/absence and behaviour of males in the house including a) adult males and b) male children (brothers/ cousins/peers). **3** The use of corporal punishment in the home and/or at school.
Individual level	**1** The girl's priorities and if she recognises how they interact/ conflict with each other, including those related to education and leisure time. **2** The girl's physical and cognitive maturity and awareness of social norms around her. **3** The girl's repetition of gendered social norms or her level of disruption or general 'disobedience' in other areas of her life.



PLAN INTERNATIONAL VIETNAM

Playing at home in Vietnam, 2018

2 LOOKING DEEPER: ANALYSIS OF 'GLITCHES' AND INFLUENCES

Our analysis of the SEA data is structured to consider areas where we see evidence of strong gendered expectations and norms and how those expectations are being challenged. In doing so, we take account of our broader primary data to locate our understanding of 'glitches' within the context of what the 'normal' expectations related to behaviour are.

In the case of SEA, our evidence highlights the reproduction of gendered expectations in many cases – both by the girls and their families. This is interesting in itself, but how dynamics compare to other contexts will be a key aspect of our cross-regional synthesis (once all reports have been completed). Through a series of case studies (one from each country) we see indications of where girls are challenging these norms, signalling the potential for change. Drawing from these, we are also able to consider girls' experiences – the commonalities, as well as differences – across the broader Cohort. As such, in the following sub-sections we explore what type of 'glitch' can be observed in a girl's specific context, and in what area of their life, and, over time, related to expectations of acceptable or unacceptable behaviour in terms of:

i. **girls' appearance and behaviour**
ii. **girls' interactions with boys and access to spaces**
iii. **girls' future roles (marriage and children)**
iv. **girls' rights and gender equality (education and division of labour).**

Although in SEA glitches were observed across all of the girls, the case studies provide examples of where this 'pushback' is more pronounced; the case studies also provide variation and the opportunity to consider different potential influences. Our primary analysis is supported by broader literature, as well as a series of national-level indicators which point to broader gendered outcomes, for example, national education statistics or statistics on marriage and childbirth.



PLAN INTERNATIONAL VIETNAM

Doing homework in Vietnam, 2017

2.1 GIRLS' EXPECTATIONS OF APPEARANCE AND BEHAVIOUR

2.1.1 Gendered expectations of appearance

What are the expectations of appearance?

Across the three SEA countries, both girls and their family members describe gendered expectations of girls' appearance, though the 'norm' in each context differs slightly. In all three countries, girls often associate beauty and appearance with being 'clean' and in turn being regarded as a 'good girl': **"It is important to be good-looking as others will consider me hard-working. Then, I am satisfied with myself. Dirty girls are considered lazy"** (Thearika, Cambodia, 2018).

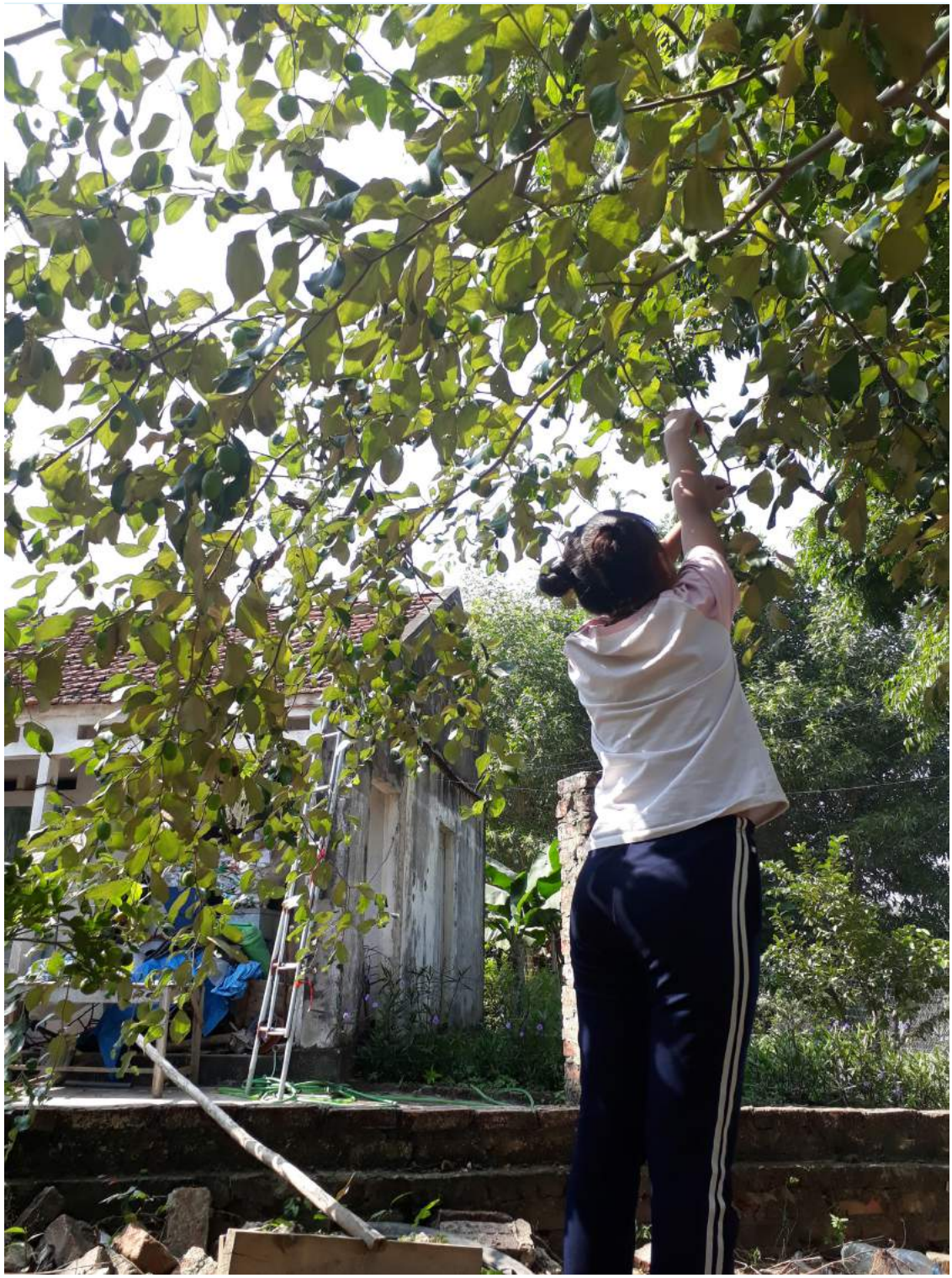
The importance of appearance in terms of a girl's place in the wider community is also emphasised: **"I hope she will be better-looking, and mature. If she isn't, villagers will criticise her"** (Davy's mother, Cambodia, 2017), while some parents are concerned about bullying related to girls' appearance: **"They said I gained weight. My mother told me to stop gaining weight because other children might bully me"** (Christine, Philippines, 2018). When explaining why they think being beautiful is important, some girls reiterate the concept, often also expressed by their mothers, that peers and the community critique appearance: **"So others won't laugh at you"** (Christine, Philippines, 2017); **"If we are too fat or thin, we look clumsy"** (Roumany, Cambodia, 2016); **"If girls are ugly, not beautiful, you will feel embarrassed"** (Thom, Vietnam, 2016).

In all three contexts, there are girls who associate being beautiful with being 'loved' and being 'attractive': **"Yes, [being beautiful is important] because beautiful girls will be loved by more people"** (Hoa, Vietnam, 2016); **"[It is important to be beautiful because] if you're grown up already, no one will be attracted to you"** (Christine, Philippines, 2017), as well as with self-esteem and confidence: **"[It is important that I am beautiful] to help me become more self-confident"** (Kim, Vietnam, 2017); **"I think being good-looking allows me to socialise myself well"** (Puthea, Cambodia, 2018). In Cambodia, Roumany states a clear distinction between expectations of males and females: **"[It is important for girls or] no one will love us when we grow up… It is ok if boys are not beautiful, but they must be rich"** (Roumany, Cambodia, 2016).

A number of girls link beauty with being fair-skinned, with parents in the Philippines and Cambodia referring to the media as a key source for this concept: **"She's saying a lot of things like buying her stuff so her skin will be smooth […] Like what she sees on TV. I said she can't use those yet because she's still young. If you're older, I'll buy those for you. She wants to become fairer"** (Jasmine's mother, Philippines, 2018); **"[Being beautiful means] to be fair-skinned… Have long hair… Have a high, straight nose"** (Mahalia, Philippines, 2016), and to be **"like a Barbie"** (Mahalia, Philippines, 2017). The Cohort girls in Cambodia are particularly focused on using beauty products, from skin-lightening lotion, to make-up, and perfume and this is often associated with growing up and becoming a young woman. Parents view these products as damaging and are concerned about advertisements: **"I want to use lotion to get white skin, but my mum refuses to buy it for me"** (Davy, Cambodia, 2017); **"[TV adverts] provoke and seriously spoil some girls"** (Davy's mother, Cambodia, 2017).

How and why are girls challenging these expectations?

It is striking that conformity to gendered expectations of girls' appearance dominates the Cambodia and Philippines Cohort girls'



PLAN INTERNATIONAL VIETNAM

Picking fruit in Vietnam, 2018

discourse. In Cambodia all 12 of the girls and in the Philippines 12 out of 14 of the girls reiterate norms that emphasise the importance of girls being beautiful. However, there is a notable difference in the attitudes of the girls from Vietnam, where over half (11 out of 20) demonstrate explicit 'glitches' in the reproduction of this norm. The way that this is explained often relates to prioritising education over appearance, or negative associations of beauty with richness, although sometimes girls aren't clear. This is explored in the sections below.

"Outside appearance is not important"

Many of the girls in Vietnam who dispute the importance of being beautiful reject the concept completely: **"No. Outside appearance is not important"** (Chau, Vietnam, 2017), and frame their attitude around what is much more important: focusing on their education. For example:

> **"[Being beautiful is] not necessary… We just need to get good academic results and be kind. There's no need to be beautiful."**[42]
> (Mai, Vietnam, 2016)

> **"…appearance is not important. The importance is whether I study well or not."**
> (Tan, Vietnam, 2017)

> **"Only the girls who are more interested in playing than in learning need to be beautiful."**
> (Trinh, Vietnam, 2017)

On the **Structural Level**, Vietnam has a traditionally strong focus on education and has seen significant progress in national literacy levels (see Figure 10 and Annex Two). Respect for education has been described as "essential to the Vietnamese character",[43] and 5.7 per cent of GDP goes on education in Vietnam (2013), compared to 1.9 per cent in Cambodia (2014), and 2.7 per cent in the Philippines (2009).[44] This could in part explain the Cohort girls' prioritisation of education over appearance, in a context where educational achievements are central in defining good character, and preoccupation with appearance may be regarded as a distraction from studying: **"This may make her ignore study and only care about how to be beautiful in boys' eyes"** (Thom, Vietnam, 2018).

Two girls in Vietnam also associate preoccupation with appearance with "rich girls" and appear to be critical of these girls: **"…and the girls who are in rich families seem to be arrogant"** (Trinh, Vietnam, 2017). Hoa, also in Vietnam, comments, **"Because what happen[s] in your mind will be shown by your appearance… Maybe rich girls will be interested in [being beautiful]"** (2017).

There are also girls who do not directly challenge norms around girls' appearance but do indicate that they do not necessarily agree with this attitude despite vocalising it. When asked why they think it is important that girls are beautiful, girls in all three contexts suggest their response was an automatic repetition of a dominant norm: **"I think it is. I don't know why"** (Sen, Vietnam, 2017); **"Girls must be beautiful, but I don't know why"** (Leakhena, Cambodia, 2017). Responses like these indicate the potential for a change in attitude – often gendered norms simply go unquestioned, but when posed the question these girls distance themselves somewhat from the attitude and demonstrate that they do not necessarily agree with the norm.

Looking closely at Ly's case study, we can explore this potential further and investigate how and why girls are challenging gendered norms related to appearance and 'appropriate' behaviour.



CASE STUDY: LY

Vietnam

Ly is 13 years old and lives alone with her mother in a village in the Quang Ngai Province on the South-Central Coast of Vietnam. Her maternal grandmother lived with them until her death in 2018, and Ly's father died before she was born. Ly's uncles, aunts, and male and female cousins live close by and play a central role in her upbringing and social life. In 2017, Ly's mother described her situation: **"I am both a mother and a father. I am alone, so I feel [it is] very difficult."** Ly's mother's most stable source of income comes from farming and over the years she has taken on various forms of secondary activities such as brickmaking and bundling wool. The family live in a house that was owned by Ly's grandmother and they also own some paddy fields which only yield enough for family consumption, and not for selling.

Ly is in Grade 7 – the correct school year for her age – and, while her mother has described her as somewhat "lazy" with studying over the years, Ly appears to value her education and wants to go to university: **"She said, 'Mom, you do not see I have to study, prepare lessons. I have a lot of books to learn now'"** (Ly's mother, 2018). Ly's mother dropped out of school in Grade 6 and places importance on supporting Ly to stay in education **"until she can't any more"** (2017) so that her life turns out differently to her own: **"She will do what she wants providing that she is not a farmer"** (2017). However, her mother also views Ly's higher education aspirations as unrealistic, saying, **"[They are] dreams… we do not have economic [capacity] to support her to become a doctor… I just [told] her to finish Grade 12"** (2018). Her mother hopes that Ly's education will mean she will have a professional job in the future.

Despite living in an all-female house, Ly is very aware of a gendered division of labour in her community: **"Boys do not have to do housework. They just go to play. They play skipping, football… I feel tired and I find it unfair. Girls must do more because girls are obedient"** (Ly, 2014). Her mother also states that



IN 2018, LY DESCRIBED HERSELF AS "AGGRESSIVE", "MORE MANLY", AND "LIKE A BOY".

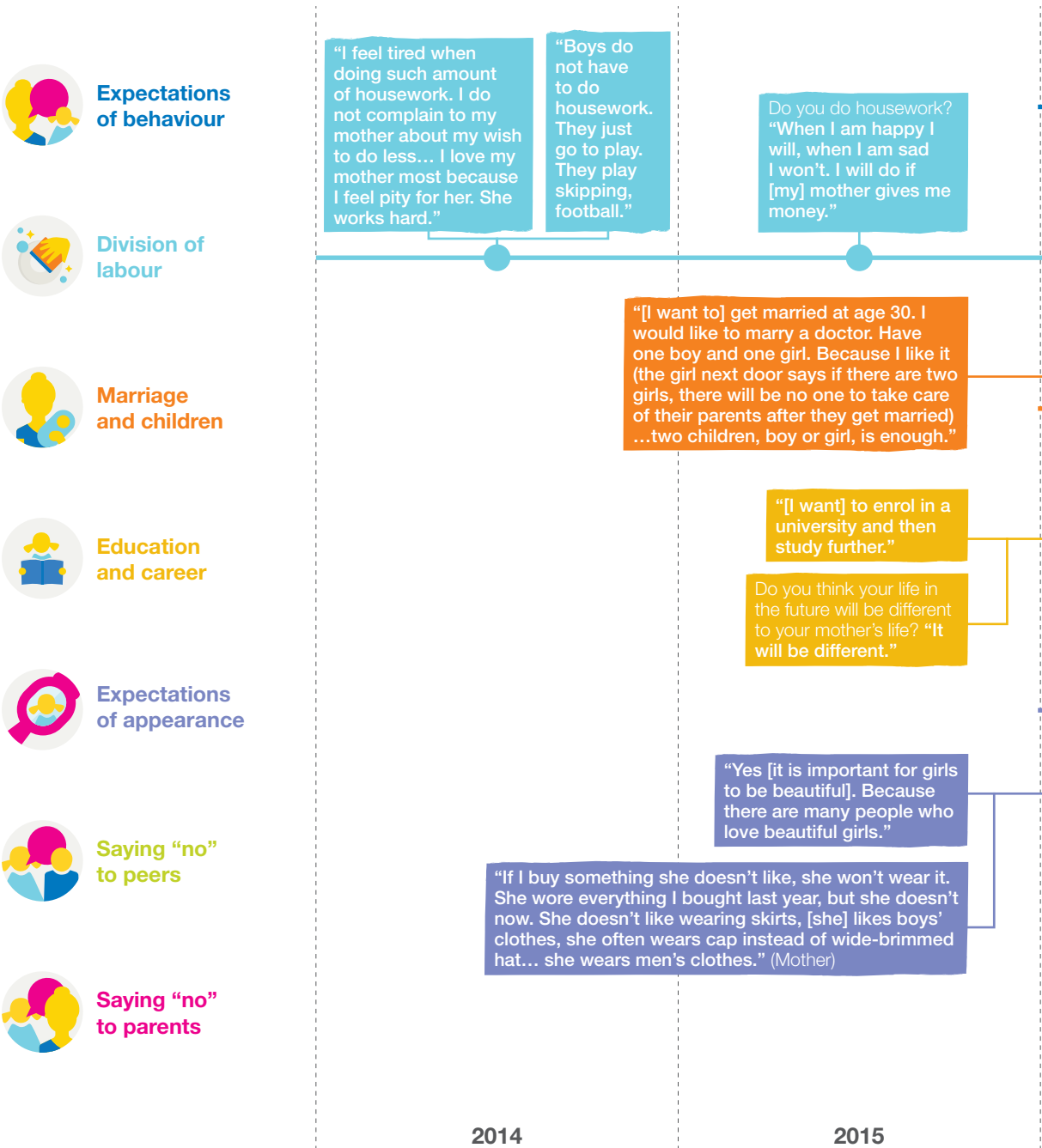
this is the case in other homes: **"It is implied that [the] wife must do housework and [the] husband goes to earn money… I don't know if it is fair or unfair because I don't have a husband"** (Ly's mother, 2015). Her mother carries out most of the household work and from 2015 onwards consistently reports issues in receiving help from Ly, who expects to be paid by her mother to carry out her assigned chores. At school, Ly is a team leader and says that she uses her position to get boys to carry out her allocated chores: **"[I should] clean up, but I never do. I asked some boys to clean up for me… I request them [to] do [it] and they must follow"** (Ly, 2018).

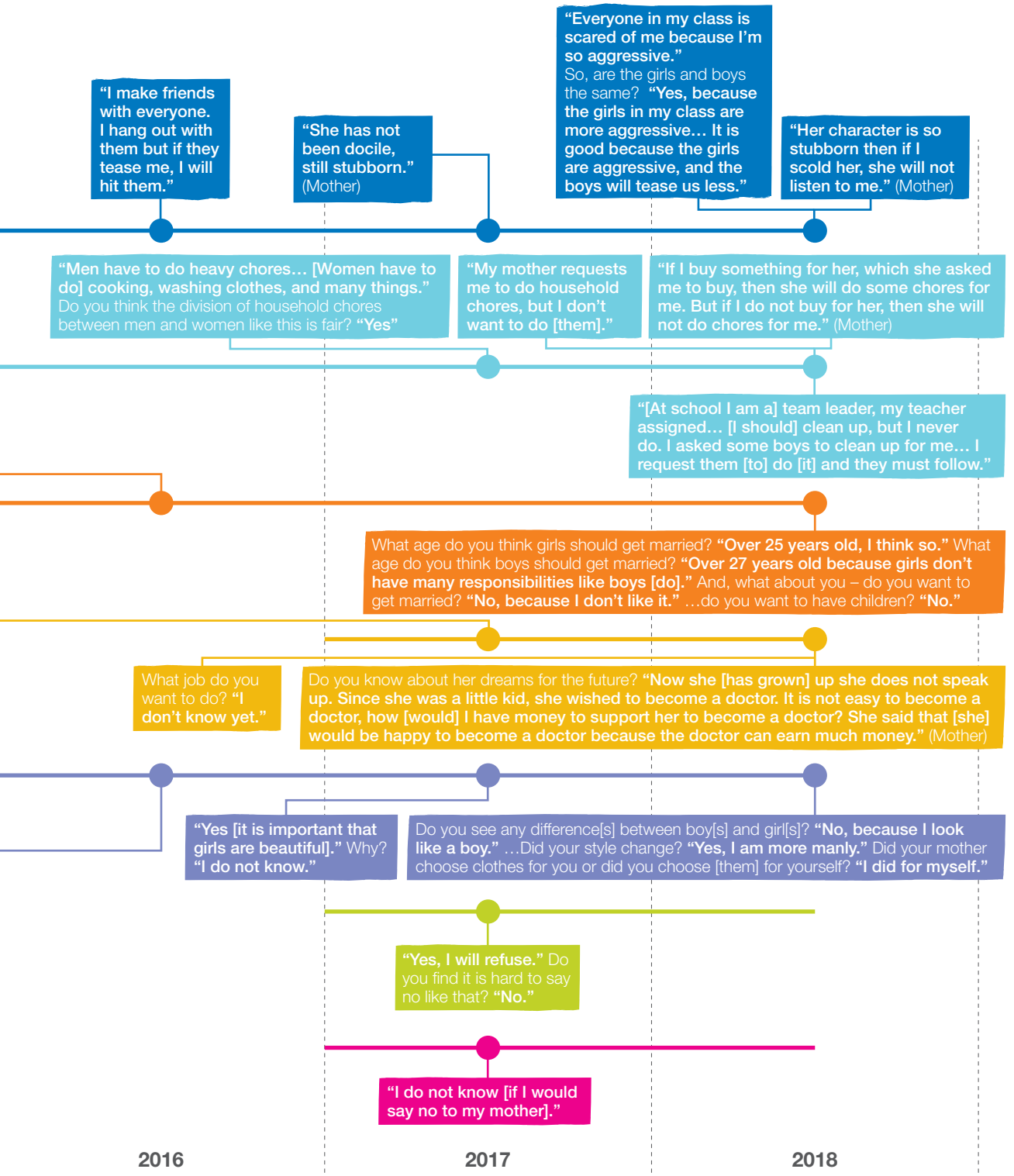
Ly is described by her mother and the researchers as cognitively mature[45] and has started menstruating; however, she reports knowing little about sexual and reproductive health. Her mother would like Ly to learn about sexual and reproductive health at school and in 2017 said that the advice she herself gives to her daughter is **"to be careful when going out to play with her friends because I am afraid that some of her friends are stubborn. I also tell her to keep distance from boys"** (2017). In 2018, Ly's mother reports being stricter with her daughter in terms of where she goes and who she spends time with: **"I absolutely do not allow her to go out to play. After school, she usually stays at home. In the evening, girls should not go out… I said to her that I would kill her if she had a boyfriend"** (2018).

Ly and her mother both describe having a strained relationship, in particular because Ly rarely obeys her mother. Her mother describes Ly as "stubborn" and "not docile",[46] among aspects of Ly's behaviour which diverge from expectations of girls in the community. In 2018, Ly described herself as "aggressive", "more manly", and "like a boy"; her mother has reported being less worried about Ly at school, because she knows that the boys there are scared of her. Ly herself says she does not like interacting with boys and overall does not report having many close friends other than her cousins.

FIGURE 2: LY

Timeline of 'glitches' (*when* and *where*)




"I make friends with everyone. I hang out with them but if they tease me, I will hit them."
"She has not been docile, still stubborn." (Mother)
"Everyone in my class is scared of me because I'm so aggressive." So, are the girls and boys the same? "Yes, because the girls in my class are more aggressive… It is good because the girls are aggressive, and the boys will tease us less."
"Her character is so stubborn then if I scold her, she will not listen to me." (Mother)
"Men have to do heavy chores… [Women have to do] cooking, washing clothes, and many things." Do you think the division of household chores between men and women like this is fair? "Yes"
"My mother requests me to do household chores, but I don't want to do [them]."
"If I buy something for her, which she asked me to buy, then she will do some chores for me. But if I do not buy for her, then she will not do chores for me." (Mother)
"[At school I am a] team leader, my teacher assigned… [I should] clean up, but I never do. I asked some boys to clean up for me… I request them [to] do [it] and they must follow."
What age do you think girls should get married? "Over 25 years old, I think so." What age do you think boys should get married? "Over 27 years old because girls don't have many responsibilities like boys [do]." And, what about you – do you want to get married? "No, because I don't like it." …do you want to have children? "No."
What job do you want to do? "I don't know yet."
Do you know about her dreams for the future? "Now she [has grown] up she does not speak up. Since she was a little kid, she wished to become a doctor. It is not easy to become a doctor, how [would] I have money to support her to become a doctor? She said that [she] would be happy to become a doctor because the doctor can earn much money." (Mother)
"Yes [it is important that girls are beautiful]." Why? "I do not know."
Do you see any difference[s] between boy[s] and girl[s]? "No, because I look like a boy." …Did your style change? "Yes, I am more manly." Did your mother choose clothes for you or did you choose [them] for yourself? "I did for myself."
"Yes, I will refuse." Do you find it is hard to say no like that? "No."
"I do not know [if I would say no to my mother]."
2016
2017
2018



Femininity and masculinity

In the case of Ly, we can see a shift in her attitude regarding expectations of girls' appearance from acceptance of the norm that girls should be beautiful (2016), **"Yes [they should be]. Because there are many people who love beautiful girls"** (Ly, 2016), to a repetition of the norm but with an indication that she does not fully agree with the idea: **"Yes [it is important for girls to be beautiful]. I do not know [why]"** (Ly, 2017). In 2018, while Ly does not explicitly state her opinion on whether she thinks girls should be beautiful, she and her mother describe behaviour which demonstrates a 'glitch' in gendered norms related to femininity and masculinity. From 2016, Ly's mother reports her daughter's new interest in her appearance and choosing her own clothes, noting that Ly **"wore everything I bought last year, but she doesn't now. She doesn't like wearing skirts, [she] likes boys' clothes… she wears men's clothes"** (Ly's mother, 2016). Her mother does not appear to criticise this behaviour and, in 2018, Ly describes changes in her own appearance: **"I look like a boy… I am more manly"** and when asked if her mother chose the clothes that she wears Ly replies, **"I did for myself"** (Ly, 2018).

On the **Individual Level**, Ly is observed by her mother and the researchers as being mature for her age – physically and cognitively – and demonstrates 'glitches' in a number of other areas (see Figure 2). Early adolescence and the onset of puberty has been shown to be an important period for the development and formation of personal identity including values, principles, roles, as well as gender identity for both boys and girls, although identity formation often comes in middle-to-late adolescence for boys.[47] Ly, along with seven other Cohort girls in Vietnam (eight out of 14 girls in the Philippines and three out of 12 in Cambodia), had started menstruating in 2018 and is in this early stage of puberty where identities take form.

On the **Social Level**, Ly and her mother have an increasingly strained relationship,


PLAN INTERNATIONAL VIETNAM

At home in Vietnam, 2018

particularly in relation to Ly's stubbornness and insistence that she is paid to help with housework. However, it is notable that while Ly's mother highlights a change in her daughter and indicates that Ly is not adhering to social norms for girls, she does not criticise Ly's choice nor report telling Ly to change her appearance. Neither Ly nor her mother report any use of corporal punishment in the home. Ly's mother reports "scolding" Ly, saying, **"It is not allowed for parents to spank her continuously. They should talk to her, right?"** (2017), expressing an anti-corporal punishment attitude that also infers the illegality of violent punishment (see Annex Two for national corporal punishment laws).

Further potential influences on Ly's behaviours that challenge gendered norms of femininity and masculinity may relate to the fact she is growing up in an all-female household – a situation wherein traditional gendered roles are often set aside out of necessity. In 2017, Ly's mother described herself as **"both a mother and a father"** and while Ly repeats the gendered norm that male work means **"heavy chores"** and women's work is **"cooking, washing clothes and many things"** (Ly, 2017), in her home, all household tasks and manual labour are carried out by females.

Other girls in the Vietnam Cohort, such as Huong, make similar statements to Ly, where they identify preferences and behaviours in themselves usually associated with boys. When asked, "Does your mother buy dresses for you?", Huong says, **"No, because there are a lot of dresses in our wardrobe. And I don't like dresses. I think I am a boy"** (2016). She goes on to say, **"Maybe I love to play with boys and love their games. Sometimes I say to my friends, 'Why do I look like a boy so much?'"** (Huong, 2016). Statements such as these highlight the prominence of gendered norms surrounding 'feminine' and 'masculine' appearance and behaviours, where girls who find themselves preferring something other than the norm describe themselves as the opposite sex (see Box 5 on 'performing' gender and sexuality).

2.1.2 Gendered expectations of behaviour

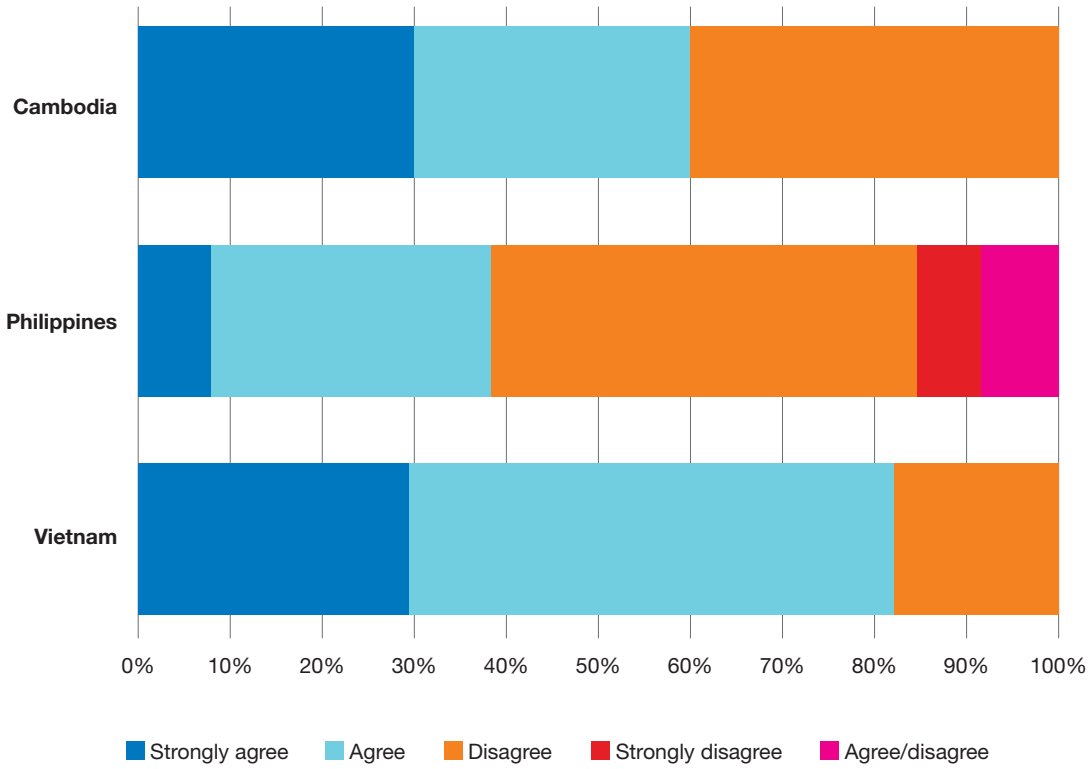
What are the expectations of behaviour?

Ly's case further exemplifies 'glitches' relating to gendered expectations of behaviour for girls. The dominant 'norm' expressed by parents and reiterated by the majority of the Cohort girls in the three SEA contexts is the expectation that 'good' girls should be "docile",[48] "submissive",[49] "obedient",[50]: **"She should always be a feminine girl. Her personality must be docile and know to help people"** (Trinh's father, Vietnam, 2017); **"[Mahalia] really knows how to behave (in a cute or feminine way) because girls are really like that"** (Mahalia's mother, Philippines, 2017); **"Girls should be polite and walk appropriately"** (Leakhena, Cambodia, 2017).

How and why are girls challenging these expectations?

In Vietnam, a number of girls who challenge the norm that it is important for girls to be beautiful state that having a good "attitude" or "character" is more important – they define this thus: **"Good character is obedience, not talking back to parents, hard-working, studying well"** (Thi, Vietnam, 2017); **"[Girls should] have goodness and good morals"** (Oanh, Vietnam, 2017). The gendered norm that expects 'good' behaviour from girls is expressed by a number of Cohort parents (in Cambodia and Vietnam in particular), in response to the statement "Girls are better behaved than boys" (see Figure 3). Many

Figure 3 Parent/carer attitudes: "Girls are better behaved than boys", 2018-2019



girls outline the expected social 'sanctions' that come with non-adherence to the norm: **"[I will be] isolated and people will not treat me well"** (Nhi, Vietnam, 2017); **"People complain and tell us not to play with those girls [who do not adhere to expectations]"** (Thi, Vietnam, 2016); **"Outsiders will say [to/about] their family and their parents: 'You have children but you don't know how to raise them to grow up'"** (Uyen, Vietnam, 2018).

Ly herself explains that to be a good girl in her mother's eyes means being **"diligent and docile"** (Ly, 2017), demonstrating an awareness of the norm. Yet her mother

Box 4 Saying "no"

Every girl in the SEA Cohort reported feeling they would be able to say "no" to either their peers or their parents. In 2017, 12 girls reported being able to say "no" to both their peers and parents. Overall, more girls were comfortable defying their friends' requests than their parents, particularly in Cambodia and the Philippines. In Vietnam, girls were more likely to say "no" to their parents: 11 out of 20 girls in Vietnam reported they felt able to say "no" to their parents versus five out of 12 girls in Cambodia and only one out of 13 girls in the Philippines. The reasons girls felt they could not say "no" to their parents give a glimpse into girls' lives at home in SEA. The two most common reasons girls gave for following their parents' orders were fear of corporal punishment and the need to adhere to expectations of "obedient" behaviour. Interestingly, there is a geographical divide with these two reasons. Cohort girls in Cambodia and the Philippines primarily cited fear of corporal punishment as a reason they would not say "no" to their parents: **"I just do as I am told, or I will be cursed and beaten"** (Lina, Cambodia, 2017); **"They spank me sometimes if I don't follow them"** (Rosamie, Philippines, 2017). In Vietnam, girls said that they do not say "no" to their parents simply because they are their parents: **"But I also want to do it, because they are my parents. There is no reason for me to refuse to do [what they ask]"** (Sen, Vietnam, 2017); **"[I would do as they ask] because my parents only want to do good things for me"** (Huong, Vietnam, 2017).The fear of corporal punishment in response to this question for Cambodian and Filipino girls may in part explain why they are less willing to say "no" to their parents than girls in Vietnam. (See Annex Two for national corporal punishment laws).

The majority of girls in SEA reported that they were able to say "no" to their peers – 63 per cent in Cambodia, 90 per cent in the Philippines and 94 per cent in Vietnam. When asked to explain why they were able to say "no" to their friends, some girls stated that nobody could force them to do things they did not want to do: **"[I] will not do what they request me to do because I do not want to do it, so no one can force me"** (Thom, Vietnam, 2017). Sometimes this defiance of their friends was because of perceived risks, such as going to bad places or disobeying their parents' expectations: **"Maybe [I would] get angry; I won't agree to do it if it's bad"** (Chesa, Philippines, 2017). Girls who could not say "no" to their friends were fearful of losing friendships or playmates in school or in the community: **"I will just do as they ask […] so that I can join them"** (Jocelyn, Philippines, 2017).

consistently reports instances where Ly challenges this norm: **"She has not been docile, [she is] still stubborn"** (Ly's mother, 2017). It is interesting to note that on the **Social Level**, the researcher observed that Ly's mother 'smiled' when describing her daughter in this way and said, **"I understand her character"** (2017). Though Ly's mother wants Ly to be **"good, obedient, study well, and obey adults"** (2017) and is frustrated when Ly does not obey her: **"Her character is so stubborn then if I scold her, she will not listen to me"** (2018), she does not use any drastic measures to change Ly's behaviour.

Exploring Ly's described behaviour further, from 2017, she directly challenges the expected characteristic of 'docility' in girls, in her being "aggressive" and in reports of her being violent towards her peers. The associations of aggressiveness and violence with males is a point that is explored further in Section 2.2.1, however, it is important to highlight here that in all three contexts these are characteristics attributed by both girls and family members to masculinity: "**Boys are more aggressive, so I worry about them less"** (Yen's mother, Vietnam, 2018). There are other examples, wherein boys who do not demonstrate these behaviours are regarded as a minority and often assigned descriptions such as "sissy", "gay", "gentle", and "girlish": **"Well, my little boy is somewhat girlish. He's even labelled as gay by some people around"** (Melanie's mother, Philippines, 2016); **"I have a few male friends. They like playing with girls. Sometimes, we call them gays"** (Kannitha, Cambodia, 2017) (see discussion in Box 5).

Ly's self-described aggressiveness therefore demonstrates a 'glitch' in the reproduction of these gender rules around femininity and masculinity. In 2018, she said that **"Everyone in my class is scared of me because I'm so aggressive"** (Ly, 2018), and in 2017 described how she would deal with bullying: **"I make friends with everyone. I hang out with them but if they tease me, I will hit them"** (Ly, 2017). Parents/carers of girls who describe themselves as aggressive or violent often have a positive view of such behaviour, associating it with self-defence and needing to worry less about their daughters at school as **"It's actually the boys who are afraid of her"** (Chesa's mother, Philippines, 2017).

On the **Social Level** it is evident that gendered norms which require girls to be submissive and expect them to be weak are instilled in the girls by the people around them: **"I just tell her to be good. She's submissive now, she doesn't talk back to parents. Whatever we ask her to do, she obeys"** (Christine's mother, Philippines, 2017); **"Boys are stronger than girls. Girls are shyer than boys"** (Ly's mother, Vietnam, 2017). The girls who take what they have been told and challenge it show that they do not want to be categorised and restricted to being "weak" in their behaviour and expressions of identity. For example, Uyen in Vietnam says, "**[Girls should be] simple… [boys should be] powerful… because the teachers teach me that at school"**, but also questions this, saying, **"Playing marbles and football are also powerful games, which will make girls stronger"** (2018). Puthea in Cambodia acknowledges that strength is a characteristic associated with boys but thinks that **"Girls should be strong and determined because girls are also human"** (Puthea, Cambodia, 2017). Finding peers who challenge these norms in a similar way appears to encourage girls in their rejection of the gender rules; however, in some cases it also emphasises the "us" and "them" dynamic between boys and girls: **"Sometimes I play powerful games, I also think that I am a boy. I have a friend. She always thinks that she is a boy. She also plays the powerful games like me with boys"** (Huong, Vietnam, 2016).

Box 5 Use of language: 'performing' gender and sexuality

As gender is a social construct made up of 'acceptable' behaviours for males and females, when individuals dress, behave, or demonstrate any characteristics of a particular gender it is often described as 'performing' gender. When males or females do not conform to their allocated gender, and instead demonstrate gendered characteristics usually associated with the opposite sex, there is often backlash from society. Derogatory language is sometimes used to critique or draw attention to gender non-conformity. A number of the SEA Cohort girls and their family members (as explored in the sections above) use specific language to describe gender non-conformity in others and, in some cases, also in themselves. However, the meaning behind words and the way they are interpreted differs between languages and is often difficult to translate, with connotations in English that may be different to those intended in the original language.

To frame understanding, below are translations and definitions of words related to gender non-conformity provided by the Plan International country offices in Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

Philippines 'gay'
'Bakla': a boy is often referred to as *'bakla'* if he does things or acts how a girl would usually be expected to.

Philippines 'lesbian'
'Tomboy': a girl is referred to as a *'tomboy'* if she does things or acts how a boy would usually be expected to.

Vietnam 'gay'
'Gay' means *'pédé'*, male homosexual. This word is very common in Vietnam and used in a negative way to describe a boy who has the voice and appearance of a girl or often wears girls' clothes. For example:

> Should their skin be as white as girls' skin?
> **"No, everyone will think that those boys are gay/*Không. Vì trắng là họ tưởng bị bê đê*"**
> (Tan, Vietnam, 2018)

Vietnam 'lesbian'
'đồng tính' means homosexual. 'Lesbian' refers to a woman who is sexually attracted to other women. For example, in the statement below, the father means that if the girl only plays with girls, she might be a female homosexual.

> **"Girls should play with boys and boys should play with girls. If girls only play with girls, it will turn out that she is a lesbian/*Con gái phải có bạn trai và con trai phải có bạn gái chứ, nếu chỉ chơi với bạn gái không thì nó bị đồng tính à.*"**
> (Oanh's father, Vietnam, 2018)

Cambodia 'gay' and 'lesbian'
In Khmer the same word is used in both cases to indicate homosexuality: ខ្ទីយ.

Cambodia 'sissy'
'Sissy' is used when boys are gentle, soft and behave "like girls". In Khmer, the same word is used as the word for 'gay': ខ្ទីយ.

Cambodia 'tomboy'
'Tomboy' is used when girls behave "like boys" – for example, when they have short hair, they are strong, they play mostly with boys, or they walk in a certain way.

2.2 GIRLS' INTERACTIONS WITH BOYS AND ACCESS TO SPACES

2.2.1 Interactions with boys

What are the expectations of interactions?

Across the three SEA Cohort countries, girls and their family members depict slightly differing norms in relation to girls' interactions with boys. What is evident in all three contexts is the shifting nature of attitudes towards male-female relationships as the girls and their male peers enter adolescence, where menstruation is associated with risks of GBV, pregnancy, and romantic relationships which may distract the girls from their studies. Notably, a number of girls who previously expressed positive attitudes and behaviours regarding play and friendships with boys demonstrated a significant shift in such attitudes in 2018, often paralleling ideas vocalised by their parents/carers which underline the 'inappropriateness' or 'risks' of male-female relationships. While very few parents/carers of the Cohort girls in Cambodia, Vietnam, and the Philippines explicitly prohibit their daughters from interactions with boys, there is a clear communication of 'conditions' surrounding these interactions wherein their acceptability depends on age: **"They are still innocent and not aware"** (Tan's mother, Vietnam, 2017); the nature of the friendship: **"They're not really close and it's only at school"** (Dolores' mother, Philippines, 2018); and the conduct of the boy in question: **"I have one male friend who is sissy… I will only play with gentle boys"** (Leakhena, Cambodia, 2017).

A common complaint by the girls is the behaviour of their male peers, varying from them having a "bad attitude", being "disruptive": **"The other boys are stubborn, hard-headed, unruly, disruptive or naughty"** (Darna, Philippines, 2017), or "lazy": **"Girls in the class are hard-working, while the boys are very lazy"** (Kannitha, Cambodia, 2017), to reports of bullying and violence where boys are described by the girls as "cruel": **"Boys play cruel and play dirty tricks"** (Thi, Vietnam, 2017), "aggressive": **"The boys are usually aggressive and fight each other. They often cause trouble, so girls have to regularly remind them [not to]"** (Trinh, Vietnam, 2017), and in some cases "violent": **"Boys play violently. They like to make fun of girls. That's why my parents don't allow me to play with boys"** (Puthea, Cambodia, 2018).

The recurrence of these reports of boys' violence and the apparent acceptance that this is inevitable and expected behaviour from males demonstrates the prevalence of gendered norms which associate males with aggression and violence and, by consequence, girls with weakness and vulnerability: **"I worry about Yen more because she is a girl. Boys are more aggressive, so I worry about them less"** (Yen's mother, Vietnam, 2018). The impact of these gendered norms is increasingly evident as the girls enter adolescence, shaping their friendships: **"[I'm not friends with boys] because boys fight with you… boys punch"** (Maricel, Philippines, 2017); leisure activities: **"No [I don't play], girls are too physically weak to play [football]"** (Puthea, Cambodia, 2017); movement, and understandings of gender and violence: **"Boys collect sap for latex from rubber trees at night. Girls cannot go out at night, or they are raped. Girls cannot work at night because they are afraid of being mistreated. It is typical to have gender-based labour here"** (Mony, Cambodia, 2018).

How and why are girls challenging these expectations?

Exploring the ways in which the girls in these three Cohort countries navigate these gendered expectations, we can see

'glitches' to varying degrees, from girls who reject norms which restrict male-female relationships, to those who accept the conditional interactions they are permitted by their parents/carers and society, to girls who do not impose their own attitudes – that they prefer not to play with boys – on other girls' choices. In the sections below, we explore the different ways that 'glitches' emerge and look in depth at the case of Roumany in Cambodia to explore what may be influencing them.

"I just don't want to"

Interestingly, some of the Cohort girls demonstrate a disjuncture between their expressed attitudes and described behaviours regarding interactions with boys. Some simply state that that it is their preference not to play with boys: **"They can [play together]… I just don't want to"** (Melanie, Philippines, 2018); **"I think they should be friends… I don't know [why]… I am only close with girls but not with boys"** (Sen, Vietnam, 2017). Others specify that this is due to their dislike of boys' behaviour: **"I have no male friends… I think boys and girls should play together, but I don't play with strange boys"** (Davy, Cambodia, 2017); ["Do you think it's good for girls and boys to play together?"] **"Yes… In my community, girls usually play with boys and girls still play football."** ["Do you have any friends who are boys?"] **"No… Because they are more mischievous"** (Thi, Vietnam, 2018). This is particularly the case in Vietnam where many of the girls report boys bullying or teasing girls: **"Boys are very naughty; their characters are so strong. Generally, they often tease girls"** (Hang, Vietnam, 2017); **"I hate boys. All boys in my class are lazy to learn, often fight with each other, usually cause trouble, tease girls"** (Trinh, Vietnam, 2018). All of these girls state that they think boys and girls can be friends and play together, but choose not to themselves – this may indicate a level of self-awareness on the **Individual Level** that their own experience could be different to that of other girls and doesn't necessarily mean that all girls should avoid these interactions.



PLAN INTERNATIONAL CAMBODIA

Discussing her social network in Cambodia, 2018

There are also a few girls who express contrasting attitudes and behaviours with regard to their parents' wishes. Chesa, for example, says that she has a "mixed" friendship group and describes playing with boys (2018); however, when asked what she thought the girl in the story read to each of the girls during the interview[51] should have done, she says, **"She should follow her mother's and father's wishes."** If she were to be in a similar position, Chesa says she would **"obey what my parents say"** in that situation and thinks that the girl in the story **"should not play with [those] girls, especially [not] with boys"** (2018). Her mixed response here potentially indicates that she is aware her parents do not approve of male-female friendships, further emphasised by her mother's 2018 comment that Chesa does not have any male friends: **"She does not like them"**, which directly contradicts Chesa's own account and suggests she is hiding these interactions from her mother.

Looking at Roumany's case in Cambodia, we can investigate these 'glitches' further.



CASE STUDY: ROUMANY

Cambodia

Roumany is 12 years old and lives alone with her grandmother (61) in a village in the south-eastern Tboung Khmum Province of Cambodia. Roumany lived with her mother, father, and older sister (19) until 2017 when her parents migrated to Thailand for work and her sister moved away to study at university: **"Previously my home was big, but since last year we changed location and the size of the house has become smaller. My parents went to Thailand to work. I miss them"** (Roumany, 2018). She also has two older brothers who moved away to work in the city and they, along with Roumany's parents, send remittances to her grandmother to help look after Roumany. However, in 2018 her grandmother raised concerns that she still struggles to provide for her granddaughter. In 2015, Roumany's parents bought land in a neighbouring province and left Roumany to live with her sister and grandmother for a year to farm it.

Roumany is in Grade 7 – the correct school year for her age – and takes private English classes after school. While her older sister is studying at university, her grandmother said that she regrets that Roumany's older brothers dropped out of school in Grade 10 to work. Her family hope that Roumany will finish Grade 12 of school and go on to do teacher training, saying, **"It will be really great if she can be something better than this"** (Roumany's mother, 2016). Roumany herself wants to become a police officer. It is important to her grandmother that Roumany and her siblings have a different life to her own poor and "war-torn" youth and she views school as central to this: **"Without good education, we can do nothing but farming"** (2017). Roumany undertakes paid work alongside school and her household chores: **"[I] plant cassava, collect cashew nuts. I do [it] for one or two days each time"** (2018). She says that she enjoys working while studying, though she does not keep her earnings: **"I give all [the] money to [my] grandmother"** (2018).

In 2018, Roumany lives in an all-female household and, while her grandmother highlights that this means she and Roumany carry out all types of work, she also outlines a gendered understanding of 'appropriate' roles: **"Male work includes heavy tasks as they are stronger than women"**



ROUMANY IS VERY AWARE OF THE 'RULES' AND 'RISKS' RELATED TO INTERACTIONS WITH BOYS.

(2017). Roumany's grandmother also expresses some attitudes which challenge these gender rules, saying, **"I guess it is fair and reasonable. I wish I could change it, but I don't know how"** (2015); **"Women have rights because women can work and if they are a housekeeper, they also do jobs at home. So, they should have the right to make decisions"** (2018). When Roumany lived with her parents and siblings, her mother described a gendered division of labour, with Roumany and her sister helping their mother with most of the chores: **"My son washes his clothes, but boys do less housework than girls"** (Roumany's mother, 2016). Roumany herself commented that, **"A good father should help his wife do things such as washing clothes, cooking rice, and cleaning the house"** (Roumany, 2016).

Roumany reports having some male friends; however, she is very aware of the 'rules' and 'risks' related to interactions with boys: **"I never travel around with boys because it is not good, but we can play something good together"** (2017). Her family are wary of male/female friendships as Roumany grows up: **"I am afraid that they do something bad, [they will be] dishonoured or scorned"** (Roumany's mother, 2016). While her grandmother worries about GBV and harassment (**"I am afraid of her being raped because we can trust no one these days"** (2017)), she does not report placing restrictions on Roumany's interactions or movement: **"I just tell her to be careful"** (2017). Roumany reports a different situation in her community, however, where **"Men travel around, but women don't"** due to risks of crime and violence, something she thinks **"is not fair because women also want to travel around"** (Roumany, 2016).

Roumany and her grandmother have a good relationship, with her grandmother describing her as an obedient girl: **"She just follows and says, 'I will do it'"** (2017). While it is clear that Roumany misses her family, she is positive and describes having a good group of friends at school and in her community. Though she and her family note little sign of puberty, Roumany has some understanding of menstrual hygiene and reproductive health: **"Girls should have children at age 20 because [I am] afraid of [early child]birth"** (Roumany, 2018).

FIGURE 4: ROUMANY

Timeline of 'glitches' (*when* and *where*)



Division of labour



Interaction with boys



Marriage and children



Education and career



Saying "no" to peers



Saying "no" to parents



Movement



Language of 'equality' and 'rights' (and 'progress')

"I think that boys and girls have different tasks, and I don't feel jealous of boys, but I feel that it is unfair. Boys should help do some housework such as cooking rice, cleaning [the] house, washing dishes, and cooking."

"It is just for boys. Girls can play only soft ball. Boys are strong, so they can play with hard ball."

"[When] I grow up more, I [will] still make friends with [boys] because they are good to me."

"I play with only female friends because they like something in common such as rope-skipping, flying horse (Khmer game), on Monday or Tuesday. I think that boys are rude, like fighting, and beating each other."

"I never travel around with boys because it is not good, but we can play something good together."

"Girls should get married at 18 [and] up. I don't know why. Girls should have children at age 20 because [I am] afraid of [early child] birth… Boys [do not have a] required age to get married. Whenever they want to marry, they can. Boys should have children at age 20. I don't know why… I want to marry at age 20 because I don't want to marry at young age."

"Anyway, men travel around, but women don't. My aunt's motorbike was robbed." Are only women robbed, not men? **"Yes, only women. Robbers dare not to challenge men… I think it is not fair because women also want to travel around, but they are afraid of thieves."**

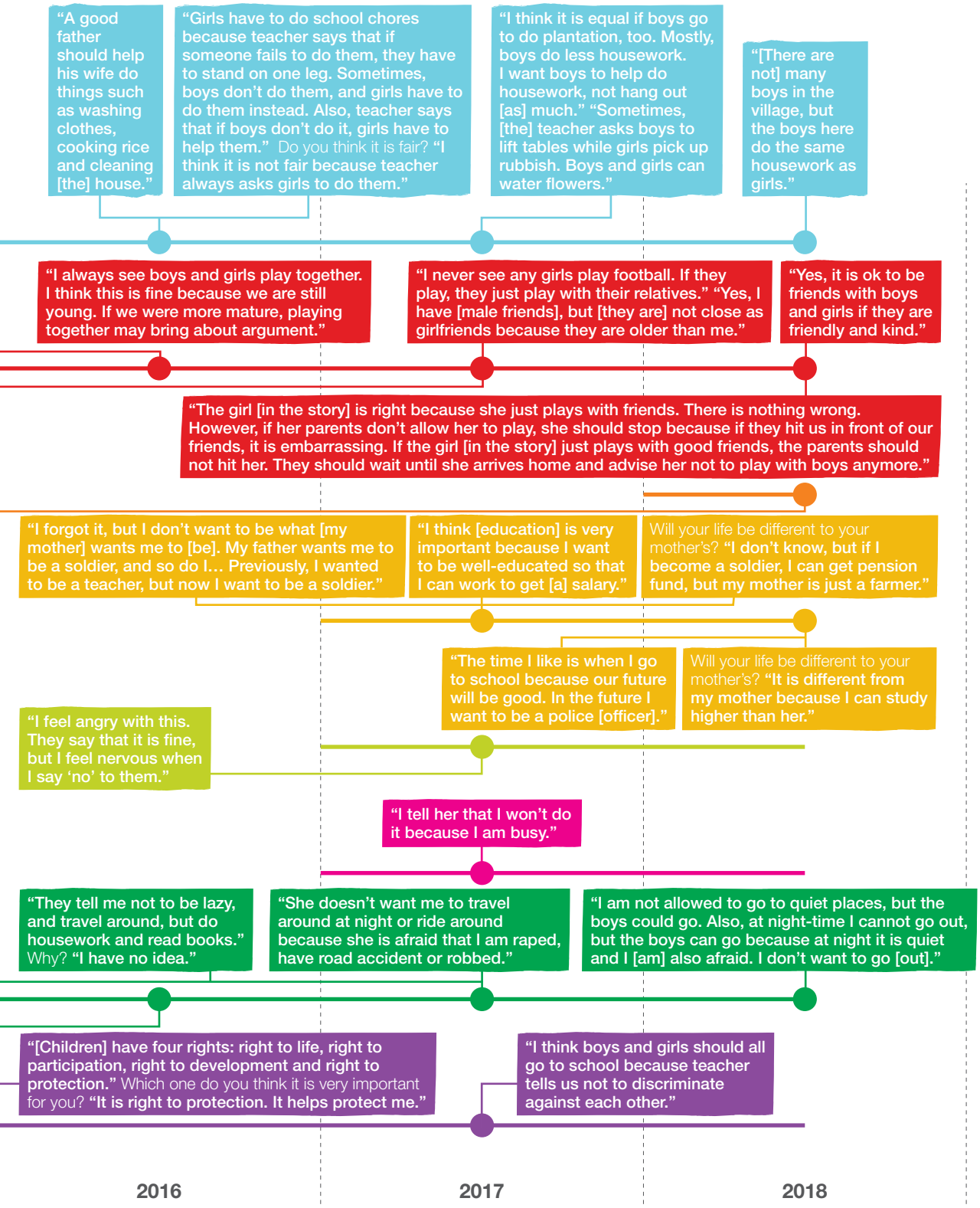
"When boys go to collect wild *longan* in [the] forest, girls cannot go… The reason is that boys are not afraid of ghost and people, but girls are. Long ago (maybe two years), a nine-year-old girl was raped in the forest, and she was beaten to give her bracelet and necklace."

"They tell me not to go to places with a lot of teenagers because there may be danger at drinking time. I think it is good as they care about me. They are afraid that somebody has argument and fights, which injures me. They also tell me not to go to places where people drink and enjoy wedding reception as I may be called a bad girl. Sometimes, boys are also warned about these depending on their parents."

"I was afraid to travel on lower road where my aunt was once about to be hit with a club. Only women were hit." Are there places where girls can go, but boys can't? **"None."**

2014

2015


"A good father should help his wife do things such as washing clothes, cooking rice and cleaning [the] house."
"Girls have to do school chores because teacher says that if someone fails to do them, they have to stand on one leg. Sometimes, boys don't do them, and girls have to do them instead. Also, teacher says that if boys don't do it, girls have to help them." Do you think it is fair? "I think it is not fair because teacher always asks girls to do them."
"I think it is equal if boys go to do plantation, too. Mostly, boys do less housework. I want boys to help do housework, not hang out [as] much." "Sometimes, [the] teacher asks boys to lift tables while girls pick up rubbish. Boys and girls can water flowers."
"[There are not] many boys in the village, but the boys here do the same housework as girls."
"I always see boys and girls play together. I think this is fine because we are still young. If we were more mature, playing together may bring about argument."
"I never see any girls play football. If they play, they just play with their relatives." "Yes, I have [male friends], but [they are] not close as girlfriends because they are older than me."
"Yes, it is ok to be friends with boys and girls if they are friendly and kind."
"The girl [in the story] is right because she just plays with friends. There is nothing wrong. However, if her parents don't allow her to play, she should stop because if they hit us in front of our friends, it is embarrassing. If the girl [in the story] just plays with good friends, the parents should not hit her. They should wait until she arrives home and advise her not to play with boys anymore."
"I forgot it, but I don't want to be what [my mother] wants me to [be]. My father wants me to be a soldier, and so do I… Previously, I wanted to be a teacher, but now I want to be a soldier."
"I think [education] is very important because I want to be well-educated so that I can work to get [a] salary."
Will your life be different to your mother's? "I don't know, but if I become a soldier, I can get pension fund, but my mother is just a farmer."
"The time I like is when I go to school because our future will be good. In the future I want to be a police [officer]."
Will your life be different to your mother's? "It is different from my mother because I can study higher than her."
"I feel angry with this. They say that it is fine, but I feel nervous when I say 'no' to them."
"I tell her that I won't do it because I am busy."
"They tell me not to be lazy, and travel around, but do housework and read books." Why? "I have no idea."
"She doesn't want me to travel around at night or ride around because she is afraid that I am raped, have road accident or robbed."
"I am not allowed to go to quiet places, but the boys could go. Also, at night-time I cannot go out, but the boys can go because at night it is quiet and I [am] also afraid. I don't want to go [out]."
"[Children] have four rights: right to life, right to participation, right to development and right to protection." Which one do you think it is very important for you? "It is right to protection. It helps protect me."
"I think boys and girls should all go to school because teacher tells us not to discriminate against each other."
2016
2017
2018

"It is fine if they are just friends…"

Roumany's case offers an example of a carer who does not strictly prohibit friendships with boys, but places 'conditions' on these interactions: **"I think it is fine if they are just friends and are honest towards each other"** (Roumany's grandmother, Cambodia, 2017). In response to being told a story about a girl whose parents physically punished her for playing football with some boys,[52] Roumany's grandmother expresses an attitude that was uncommon in the Cohort carers' responses to the same question, maintaining that, **"Girls and boys can be friends if they commit to being real friends. If they are real friends, they could go out together"** (Roumany's grandmother, 2018). While most respondents outline the risks attached to adolescent male-female relationships in their answers, Roumany's grandmother remains consistent in her attitude that these friendships can be acceptable and safe.

When asked what she would do in the same situation as the girl in the story presented during the research, Roumany says that she would **"follow my parents or grandmother"** (2018) if they told her not to go out with a boy.[53] However, she does not specify (as other girls do) what her grandmother's instructions would be or if they would prohibit her. Roumany reports having a number of male friends and confirms that she and other girls she knows regularly play with boys. Roumany displays a high level of awareness of the 'conditions' and 'risks' surrounding these interactions, however, as well as outlining her own conditions: **"It is ok to be friends with boys and girls if they are friendly and kind"** (2018). Her awareness of the risks associated with males is evidenced in her understanding of why the parents of the girl in the story punished her: **"Because she is female, alone and [they are] afraid [the boys] abuse us"** (2018).

In both 2017 and 2018, Roumany acknowledges the conditional nature of the acceptability of her friendships with boys, and the justification needed when describing her interactions with them: **"I never travel around with boys because it is not good, but we can play something good together"** (2017); **"Yes, I have [male friends], but not close as girlfriends because they are older than me"** (2018). Here, Roumany highlights distinctions between 'acceptable' male-female activities, and age-related restrictions in interactions with boys, and in both cases demonstrates how she navigates the 'rules' to continue her male friendships. In 2017, she reiterates an attitude expressed by many of the Cohort parents/carers that the older and more "mature" the girls get the less they should interact with boys – and play in general: **"I think this is fine because we are still young. If we were more mature, playing together may bring about arguments"** (2017). In doing so, she also appears to be acknowledging that there are social consequences to stepping outside the confines of the 'conditions', where male-female interactions can cause "arguments".

On the **Individual Level**, Roumany clearly has a significant level of awareness of the gendered norms around her, evidenced especially in the way she subtly justifies her interactions with males. On the **Social Level**, while Roumany's grandmother seemingly does not place restrictions on Roumany's relationships with boys, it could be suggested that she has effectively communicated not just the conditions indicated by both herself and her granddaughter but also an explanation as to why these 'rules' exist. In Roumany's case, as with many of the girls, it will be interesting to see how age further impacts these interactions.

Box 6 "They might hurt her": persistent risks and perceived risks of GBV undermining progress

Like Roumany, many of the Cohort girls in Cambodia and the Philippines demonstrate an awareness of the risks associated with male-female interactions, in particular the risk of GBV and rape: **"There may be some other problems such as being devalued by boys and suffering from being raped"** (Thearika, Cambodia, 2018); **"Boys might disrespect her while they are playing… they know you already because you always play together, they might invite you later to a place and rape you there"** (Christine, Philippines, 2018).

Many of the parents and carers voice similar concerns, alongside fears that male-female interactions could cause unplanned pregnancies and alcohol or drug abuse. In Vietnam, in particular, the Cohort girls report witnessing and experiencing bullying and violence by male peers, and attribute restrictions on male-female relationships, and their own preferences in avoiding male friendships, to boys' aggressive behaviour: **"Boys are more aggressive; Nga's [girl in the story] parents do not want her to follow boys' behaviour"** (Tan, Vietnam, 2018); **"Boys are cruel and play dirty tricks"** (Thi, Vietnam, 2017). Tan's case in Vietnam highlights two interesting points on this association of violence with males, wherein boys can provide protection for girls: **"[If] anyone bullies me, I will talk to boys for help"** (Tan, Vietnam, 2018); and the positive influence that female friendships can give to boys: **"Yes, it is [good]… because it is more fun for boys and girls to be friends. Boys often fight against each other when they play together"** (Tan, Vietnam, 2017).

In the Philippines Cohort in particular, a number of parents/carers who are concerned about GBV and unwanted pregnancies, and girls who are aware of the risks associated with male friendships, identify boys who are exempt from any restrictions or concerns as those who they describe as "gentle", "effeminate", and in a number of cases "gay" (translated from *"bakla"*: see Box 5 for exploration of meaning). Darna makes this distinction when indicating which games are and aren't acceptable for boys and girls to play: ["No boy joins you when you play '10-20?'"][54] **"Some effeminate boys do"** (Darna, Philippines, 2017) and Darna's mother reflects a similar attitude when explaining how she feels about her daughter having male friends: **"It's okay. Once she had a gay friend who came here"** (Darna's mother, Philippines, 2018). Rosamie makes the direct connection between menstruation and the risk of GBV in interactions with boys: **"I'm taking care of myself, especially when I will have menstruation. I will never let the boys touch me"** and when describing how she protects herself from this risk she states: **"I don't go with boys, but I go with my gay friends"** (Rosamie, Philippines, 2018). Adolescent birth rates in the Philippines have risen over the past two decades and at 60 adolescent births per 1,000 girls (2017) are significantly higher than Vietnam (27.3 per 1,000 – 2017) and higher than Cambodia (50 per 1,000 – 2017).[55] The Cohort girls' reiteration of norms which frame boys as a potential sexual threat and girls as needing to protect themselves from said threat could be a reflection of these statistics which demonstrate the impact of poor sex education and restricted access to contraception in a deeply conservative, Catholic country, as well as one of the lowest ages of consent of 12 (in Cambodia – 15, and Vietnam – 18).[56]

Box 7 Corporal punishment as gender-based violence against boys

In all three contexts, the use of corporal punishment is legal in the home and unlawful in school. However, research has shown that despite progress to raise awareness of the law and of the risks of corporal punishment for the welfare of children, the use of violent discipline in schools continues in Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.[57,58,59]

While most of the Cohort girls report exposure to some degree of corporal punishment or harsh discipline in the home,[60] it is notable that many identify a difference in the frequency and severity of such punishment carried out by parents, and in particular by teachers, on boys in comparison to girls:

> **"My teacher loves the girls more than the boys. I often see her hit the boys."**
> (Sen, Vietnam, 2017)

> **"Teachers beat boys more than girls because teachers love girls. Teachers ask boys to run around the school when they make mistakes. Teachers just blame girls."**
> (Nakry, Cambodia, 2017)

> **"If a boy talks in class, my teacher will ask him to go stand in the corner. If it's a girl, he will only ask her to be quiet."**
> (Kieu, Vietnam, 2017)

Some girls demonstrate an awareness of the illegality of corporal punishment:

> **"Some boys get punched by the teacher, but that's not painful because teachers are not allowed to hurt students, they can lose their jobs for it."**
> (Rosamie, Philippines, 2017)

> **"[My teacher] will heavily blame rude boys, and sometimes punishes them by [making them] collect water for washing the toilet, or by copying lessons for her. However, she just blames girls slightly, or asks them to collect water for toilet, and water crops."**
> (Leakhena, Cambodia, 2017)

The Cohort girls' observations support other research in these countries which has found that boys are more likely to have experienced corporal punishment than girls. For example, a 2014 study in Cambodia found that 17 per cent of boys and nine per cent of girls had experienced physical violence by teachers in the previous six months,[61] a 2010 study in the Philippines found that 64.8 per cent of boys compared to 40.9 per cent of girls had experienced being beaten,[62] and the 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in Vietnam found that 48.5 per cent of boys and 36.6 per cent of girls had experienced physical punishment.[63]

Parents and carers of the Cohort girls also report using corporal punishment more frequently on sons than on daughters:

> **"The boy is beaten more… because he is more hyperactive."**
> (Nhi's mother, Vietnam, 2017)

> **"I don't like boys. They are stupid. I hate them. I often beat my son, but I rarely beat my daughter because the boy is bad and stubborn."**
> (Reaksmey's mother, Cambodia, 2017)

This again reflects wider research that has found parents often approve of using corporal punishment on boys more than girls. In Cambodia, for example, a 2017 study found that 75 per cent of mothers and 57 per cent of fathers approved of physical discipline on sons, compared to 70 per cent and 47 per cent on daughters.[64]

Corporal punishment is the most common form of violence against children[65] and exposure to violence in childhood and adolescence has been shown to increase the likelihood of aggressive, delinquent, and anti-social behaviour, as well as the use of violence on others later in life.[66] The Cohort girls show awareness of gendered norms which lead to boys experiencing higher levels of violent and harsh discipline, as well as those which normalise boys' aggressive behaviour. While they may not verbally challenge these norms, their awareness demonstrates a 'glitch' and the potential to expose the socialisation process which perpetuates gender-based violence.

2.2.2 Movement and access to spaces

What are the expectations of movement?

Research has shown that at the onset of adolescence girls' movement and access to spaces decreases, while boys' freedoms either remain the same as when they were younger or their access to spaces increases. Often this is the effect of norms which expect women and girls to remain within the household and private sphere not just to carry out traditionally female roles, but to protect their bodily integrity and reputation. While the SEA Cohort girls' parents and carers express a range of attitudes in response to the statement, "Boys should have more freedoms than girls" (see Figure 5), those who disagree with the statement generally explain that neither boys or girls should have too much freedom, or simply that boys and girls are equal. Those that agree with the statement are explicit in the reasoning behind their attitude – girls are more at risk. There are differences in the responses from different countries, with half of the family members in Cambodia either agreeing or strongly agreeing (and the other half disagreeing), whilst in the Philippines only around a third agree with the statement. In Vietnam, nearly half of the family members agree with the statement – but there is a higher proportion that strongly disagree than in either of the other two countries.

"Because even if a male goes wherever, they can protect themselves; but a female, it's risky for them. There's a lot of violence around."
(Mahalia's mother, Philippines, 2018)

"Agree because we worry when girls go anywhere alone."
(Lina's mother, Cambodia, 2018)

"I strongly agree with this statement. I think sons are physically stronger than daughters. Sons can protect themselves well."
(Reaksmey's mother, Cambodia, 2018)

These attitudes are further demonstrated in parents and carers' agreement with the statement that "Girls are more at risk of violence than boys" (see Figure 6 below), where 12 out of 13 parents in the Philippines, seven out of 11 parents in Cambodia, and 11 out of 18 parents in Vietnam agreed that girls were more at risk of violence than boys.

"When girls go out, they will face with a lot of dangers; I have no worries about boys because boys are braver than girls, and girls are weaker than boys."
(Uyen's mother, Vietnam, 2018)

"Girls are delicate because they are girls… because there is some news from other *barangay*[67] that the victim is a girl."
(Darna's father, Philippines, 2018)

"I strongly agree with this statement because girls are physically weak. Moreover, girls cannot travel far, or they are called bad girls."
(Leakhena's mother, Cambodia, 2018)

Some parents in Vietnam explain that girls, unlike boys, don't need to be exposed to spaces outside of the home:

"I think that boys should go to many places to expand their communication and knowledge; I worry for girls more."
(Kim's mother, Vietnam, 2018)

"I think I will be less anxious when boys have more freedom. I also think that boys must be more trained than girls. Boys need to go outside, expand their communication; girls don't need to because they only take care of household."
(Sen's mother, Vietnam, 2018)

Figure 5 Parent/carer attitudes "Boys should have more freedoms than girls", 2018-2019

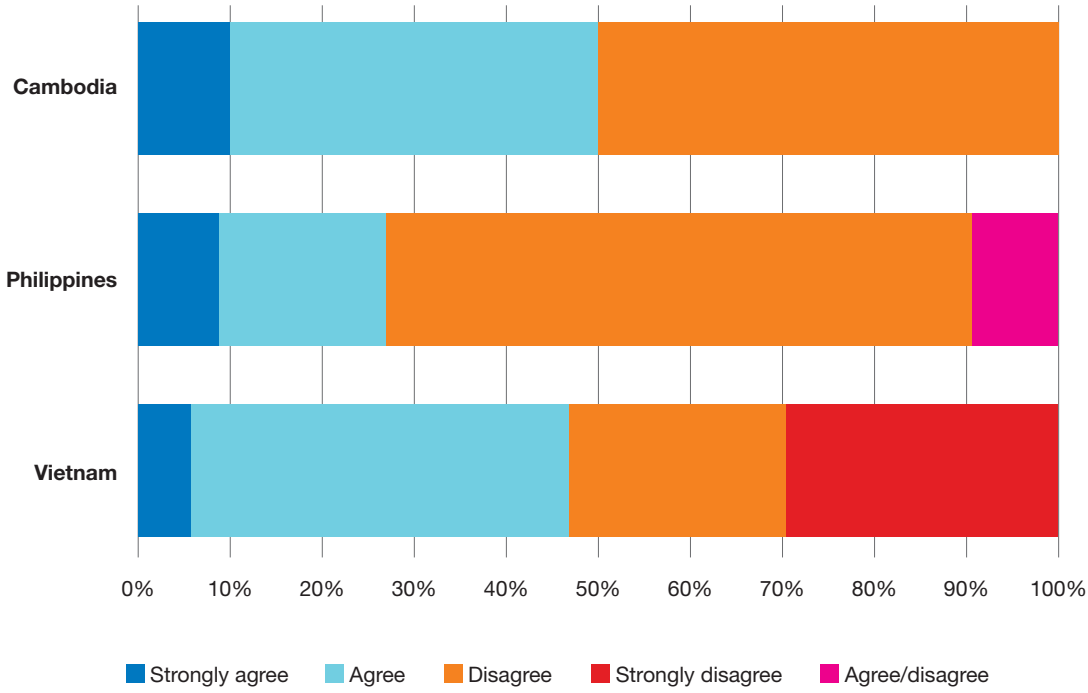
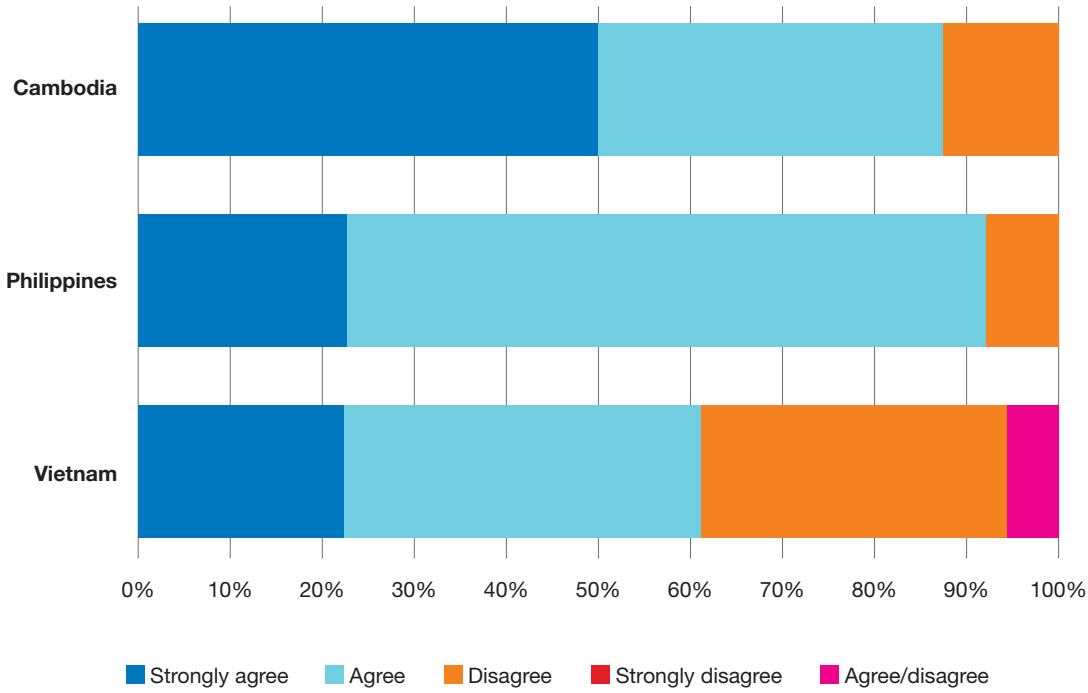


Figure 6 Parent/carer attitudes "Girls are at more risk of violence than boys", 2018-2019



How and why are girls challenging these expectations?

The majority of the Cohort girls do not demonstrate glitches in the reproduction of this norm; while a few girls identify differences in the movement and access to spaces of boys and girls, none describe behaviours which challenge the norm. This demonstrates how the real and persistent risks of violence against girls impact girls' freedoms and perpetuate gendered norms which characterise girls as "weak" and boys as "strong".

Roumany is one of the few Cohort girls who is explicit in her criticism of the restricted freedom of movement of women and girls and is aware that this restriction exists as a result of the violence and crime directed at women in her community: **"Men travel around, but women don't. My aunt's motorbike was robbed… only women [are robbed]. Robbers [don't dare to] challenge men… I think it is not fair because women also want to travel around, but they are afraid of thieves"** (Roumany, Cambodia, 2016). Roumany herself demonstrates the impact that fear of violence has had on her: **"I was afraid to travel on [the] lower road where my aunt was once about to be hit with a club. Only women were hit"** (Roumany, Cambodia, 2016); exemplifying why girls do not and cannot challenge these norms, where doing so would put them at risk: **"I am not allowed to go to quiet places, but the boys could go. Also, at night-time I cannot go out, but the boys can go because at night it is quiet and I [am] also afraid. I don't want to go [out]"** (Roumany, Cambodia, 2017).



PLAN INTERNATIONAL VIETNAM

Working at the family stall in Vietnam, 2017

Box 8 Technology and gendered access to spaces

Internet access across the three South East Asian countries varies from 26 per cent in Cambodia, to 47 per cent in Vietnam, and 56 per cent in the Philippines (2016).[68] Cohort girls' parents in these countries generally express one of two main attitudes towards technology and the internet. Many view access to the internet as a tool for learning and an aid for their daughters' education, and also a way for parents themselves to stay informed, while a number express concern about the dangers that technology and the internet can cause for their daughters. The Cohort data raises some interesting ideas about the interaction of gendered norms and technology, explored below. Internet cafes in Vietnam in particular are regarded as a space that is inappropriate or dangerous for girls. Both girls and parents indicate that these are spaces "for boys":

> **"Boys can go to internet stations; girls are not allowed to."**
> (Kim, Vietnam, 2017)

> **"…game stations, net cafes… those places are for boys. I'm worried about my daughter and I don't want her to go there. The boys usually go to those places and the girls rarely come but I also don't want to let her go there. I don't like her to play those games."**
> (Trinh's father, Vietnam, 2017)

Some girls question this rule:

> ["Where can boys go but girls can't?"] **"The football field, internet cafes…"**
> ["What do you think about that?"] **"I think it's not fair. Why can the boys come but the girls can't? Boys and girls are the same, no difference."**
> (Thom, Vietnam, 2017)

Some parents and carers are concerned about the risk the internet poses for exposure to GBV and exploitation by boys:

> **"[I am worried that] they go to the internet shops or watch inappropriate things on mobile phones. Elder boys will let them watch and then seduce them. Parents should prohibit them and not allow them to go out in the evenings as well as at weekends, so they will not be involved in social evils."**
> (Thi's mother, Vietnam, 2018)

While others worry about the impact that video games could have on the girls' studies:

> **"Generally, I am just afraid that she goes into internet shops. Because young people are addicted to games, I am afraid that she is absorbed in playing games and distracted from studying."**
> (Kim's mother, Vietnam, 2018)

> **"She will be spoiled if she goes to internet stalls. If she is crazy to play games, she will become a game addict and will not be a normal human being."**
> (Tien's grandfather, Vietnam, 2018)



PLAN INTERNATIONAL VIETNAM

Playing with siblings in Vietnam, 2017

Hang in Vietnam described being exposed to violence on the internet at school:

> **"Yesterday afternoon I went to the performance rehearsal, I watched a foreign clip in which people used knives to cut off others' heads, stabbed others, chopped others as if they were cutting up vegetables for pigs. As a result, last night, I dreamed that I was stabbed like that."**
> (Hang, Vietnam, 2018)

Some of the girls' parents indicate that hearing reports of GBV via TV and radio raise their concern for the safety of their daughters and in some cases lead them to place restrictions on their movement:

> **"Broadcasting on radio and TV really affects my feeling, especially the broadcasting about rape. I feel furious with the rapist and worry that the case may happen to my daughter. She may be raped and mistreated… I don't want her to travel far, especially with her friends, because I am afraid that she may be raped or mistreated."**
> (Bopha's mother, Cambodia, 2017)

> **"We can't avoid [it] of course, because she's already an adolescent, [we are concerned about her] having a boyfriend, what's happening that's being reported on TV now, being abused, things like that."**
> (Christine's mother, Philippines, 2017)



PLAN INTERNATIONAL PHILIPPINES

Walking to school in the Philippines, 2018

2.3 GIRLS' FUTURE ROLES: MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

2.3.1 Marriage

What are the expectations of marriage?

Across the three countries the dominant norm concerning marriage expressed by family members is that the girls will inevitably get married to a man at some point: **"Everyone wants their daughters to have a good husband and get married near the family… I hope she will get married to a man near here who is good and not naughty… anyway marriage is their fate"** (Quynh's father, Vietnam, 2017).

Parental preoccupation about the type of man their daughters will marry (**"Her dream will be to marry a rich husband later"** (Uyen's mother, Vietnam, 2018)) appears to have been transferred to some of the girls: **"[My mother worries I] might get married to someone who doesn't have a job"** (Jasmine, Philippines, 2018); **"Marriage will make me better. Without a husband, who will look after/raise me?"** (Uyen, Vietnam, 2018). In other cases, wider social norms such as those relating to inheritance are based on the assumption that girls will marry and live with their husbands: **"If my daughter gets married to a rich guy, she may not demand any inheritance from [her] parents"** (Davy's mother, Cambodia, 2017).

How and why are girls challenging these expectations?

Despite the expressed inevitability and desirability of marriage, many of the SEA Cohort girls demonstrate 'glitches' in relation to gendered norms and expectations around marriage and having children. In Vietnam, 14 out of 20 girls; in the Philippines, ten out of 14; and in Cambodia, seven out of 12 girls have at some point expressed attitudes that challenge norms that determine the age at which women "should" marry, what women and girls should achieve or prioritise before marriage, a woman's role in marriage, and how many children they should have.

"Because I am too young"[69]

Although the rates of marriage below the age of 15 are low in all three contexts (see Box 9), the percentage of girls married in adolescence, before age 18, is 15 per cent in the Philippines, 19 per cent in Cambodia, and 11 per cent in Vietnam.[70] On the **Social Level**, a prevalent concern expressed by parents and carers in the three countries – but particularly in Vietnam and the Philippines – is that their daughter may marry 'early': **"I am afraid that when she is grown up, she finishes school without a job. Or she can be at risk of getting married early because many children at the age of 17 and 18 years old have married"** (Kieu's mother, Vietnam, 2018); **"Young people here get married early"** (Jocelyn's mother, Philippines, 2017); **"[My worries are] if she goes with friends, if she's not following our advice, and if she will marry at an early age"** (Dolores' mother, Philippines, 2017); **"If it were up to me, hopefully she won't be married yet"** (Rubylyn's mother, Philippines, 2018). While concerns relating to early marriage are not explicit among the Cambodia parents and carers there are indications that such attitudes are also held and communicated by some family members. In response to the question, "What age do you think girls should be getting married?", Nakry in Cambodia comments, **"I think it is when I am 28. I don't know why. I just know it from my aunt"** (2017). Alongside this, it is interesting to note that, on the **Structural Level**, rates of child marriage of girls under 15 have declined from 3.3 per cent in 2000 to 2 per cent in 2014 in Cambodia, and marriage of girls under 18 has declined

from 25 per cent to 19 per cent over the same period.[71]

Girls in all three contexts state their own concerns about early marriage and their intentions of avoiding this: **"I should not get married now because I am too young"** (Davy, Cambodia, 2017); **"I want to get married at 25 years old. Because I don't want to get married soon […] I am fear[ful] of staying at my husband's house"** (Trinh, Vietnam, 2018); **"[I think a woman should get married] at the right age, at 25"** (Dolores, Philippines, 2018). Puthea in Cambodia reports knowing a 15-year-old girl who has just got married, saying, **"She [can't do anything she wants to and can't] still play with kids."** Hang in Vietnam reports a case of child marriage in her community saying, **"I think she is [only] in Grade 8. She is not old enough to get married and have a child"** (Hang, Vietnam, 2018).

Some mothers refer to their own experiences of and regrets about marrying early in explaining their wish that their daughters don't marry until later: **"I tell them my experiences when I was a young woman. Especially when I got married; it was unplanned. I truly regret not being able to finish my studies"** (Melanie's mother, Philippines, 2017).

Box 9 Marriage statistics in Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam

Early and child marriage:

Country	% of girls married before 15	% of girls married before 18	Legal age of marriage
Cambodia	2%	19%	18 for girls and boys; however, individuals can marry at 16 to someone who has reached the age of majority, with the consent of their parents or guardians.[72]
Philippines	2%	15%	18 for girls and boys; however, girls are eligible to marry as soon as they reach puberty and with permission of the court under the Muslim Law on Personal Status.[73]
Vietnam	1%	11%	The minimum legal age of marriage (2000) is 18 for girls and 20 for boys.[74]

Males/females average age at first marriage:

Country	Average age at first marriage (females)[75]	Average age at first marriage (males)[76]
Cambodia	22 (2010)	24.9 (2010)
Philippines	23.4 (2013)	26.9 (2010)
Vietnam	22.3 (2011)	26.4 (2011)

"Because I heard others say that"

Some of the girls state that their attitudes towards and understanding of marriage and childbearing have been influenced by things heard around them at home, in their communities, and online: **"[I should have children] about 25-30 years old… Because when I have children I will have to spend more time on caring for them."** ["How do you know about this?"] **"I heard someone [say] that when I was using Facebook"** (Trinh, Vietnam, 2018). Others suggest that their attitudes may come from awareness of **Structural Level** laws on child and early marriage, as shown in the girls' references specifically to age 18, which is the legal age of marriage for males and females in Vietnam: **"From 18 years old. I heard of this from other people. I heard someone [say] that"** (Yen, Vietnam, 2018); and **"Girl[s] should get married at 18 [and] up. I don't know why"** (Roumany, Cambodia, 2018) (see Annex Two for information about the legal age for marriage in the three countries). However, Hang in Vietnam interprets this as the girl herself having broken the law: **"She is not old enough to get married and have a child. Anyway, it is illegal for her to do so."** ["What do you mean by 'illegal'?"] **"I mean she broke the laws issued by the government"** (Hang, Vietnam, 2018). Some girls also demonstrate awareness that marriage norms are different for boys: **"Boys [do not have a] required age to get married. Whenever they want to marry, they can"** (Roumany, Cambodia, 2018).

Looking at Chesa's case in the Philippines (see case study below), we can explore how and why the Cohort girls show 'glitches' in the reproduction of marriage norms.



PLAN INTERNATIONAL PHILIPPINES

Family time at the beach in the Philippines, 2018



CASE STUDY: CHESA

The Philippines

Chesa is 12 years old and the third oldest in a household of seven. She lives in a *barangay* on the island of Masbate in the Philippines with her mother, father, older sister (aged 19), older brother (aged 16), younger brother (aged ten), and younger sister (aged three). Since she was a toddler, Chesa has slept at her maternal grandmother's house, which is next door to her family home. In 2013 her mother said Chesa **"really grew up with Mama"** (2013). In 2018, Chesa's older sister (19) returned to live at home after previously living with her grandmother.

Chesa's father is the sole earner in the household, earning an income from work as a rice farmer, while her mother looks after the children full-time. The family receive the government 4Ps financial support[77] which pays for Chesa's school fees. While Chesa's mother handles expenses related to the children, Chesa's father is the decision maker for the household, and her mother mentions a number of instances where her husband "didn't allow" her to sign up to livelihood programmes or take out a loan at the bank.

All of the school-aged children, including Chesa's older sister (19), who is in Grade 12, are in full-time education, with Chesa in Grade 7 in 2018 – the correct school year for her age. Her mother encourages Chesa in her aspirations to go to university: **"I told her to pursue her dreams. As long as we can support them (the children), we will"** (2018). However, it is clear that Chesa is aware of the family's financial constraints, and she has already offered to move to Manila to work to provide money for the family as well as stating an intention to move abroad. Because of this, her father called her "ambitious", while her mother agreed that Chesa would need to work to help support herself while attending university. Chesa thinks that school is important, and her mother describes how Chesa will prioritise studying: **"When she has an assignment or a project, she'd open her bag, spread her things on the table and do them before**



CHESA HAS ALREADY OFFERED TO MOVE TO MANILA TO WORK TO PROVIDE MONEY FOR THE FAMILY.

she holds her cell phone" (Chesa's mother, 2018).

Household work is split according to gender: Chesa, her older sister, and her mother carry out the majority of the housework. In 2017, Chesa's mother says, **"We teach her how to do chores because her father does not want a dirty house; he gets angry."** Chesa reported an increase in her allocated chores in recent years – including taking care of her baby sister.

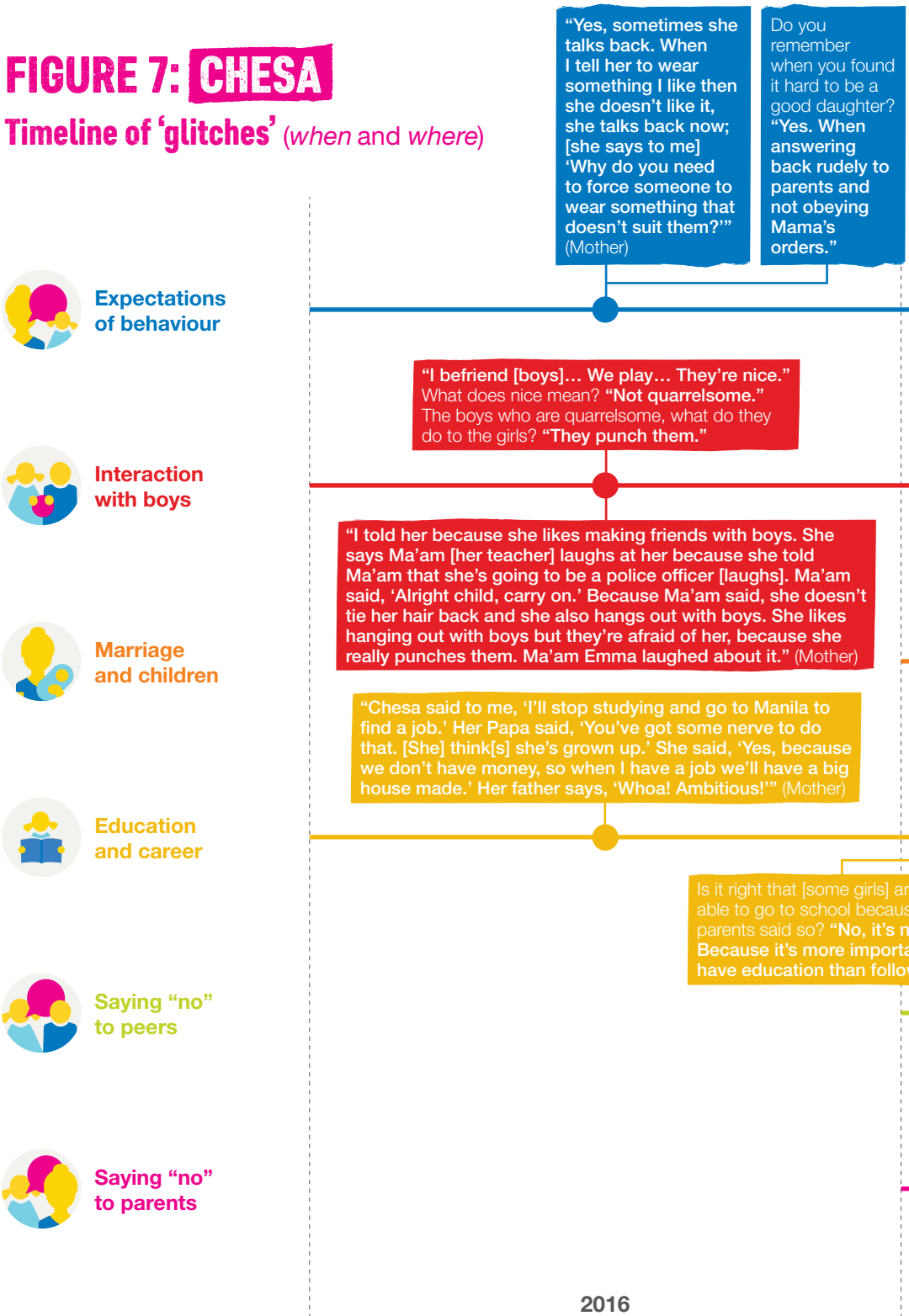
Chesa has male friends and says that her parents think it is fine for boys and girls to be friends; however, since Chesa started menstruating her mother advised her to not be **"boisterous with males any more"** (2018) and Chesa reported being told by her mother that **"when you have menstruation, you should not get close to boys…."** When asked "Why?", Chesa said, **"because I might get pregnant… [just by being close]"** (2017).

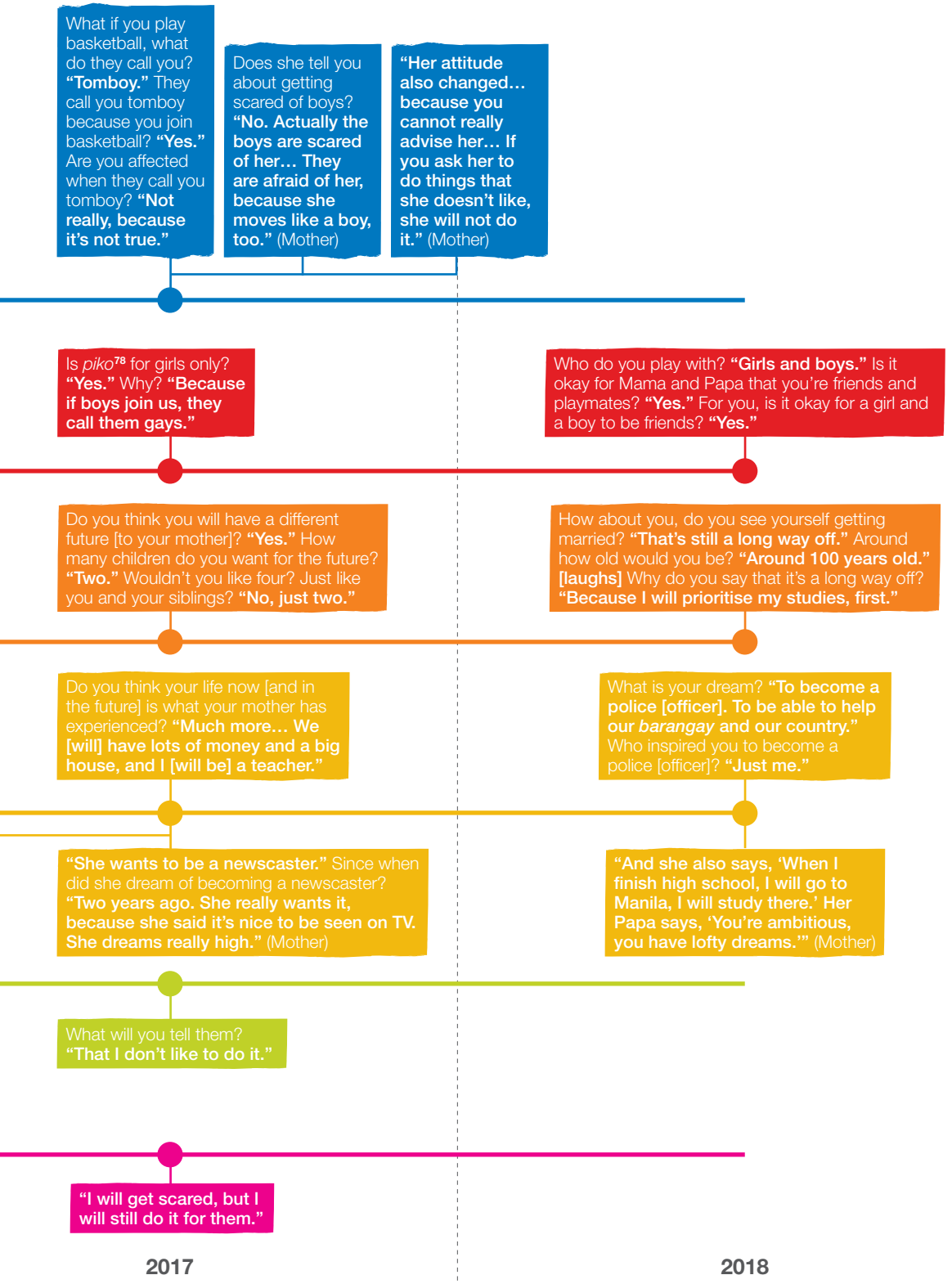
While Chesa appears to have a good relationship with her family, it is clear there are some tensions in the home and the children are not close to their father: **"They are scared of their father. If I leave them at home with their father, they get up early in the morning, because they don't want to get scolded"** (Chesa's mother, 2017). In 2018, Chesa's mother commented on the family's change in approach to discipline: **"We abandoned the idea of spanking children when they commit mistakes."** Yet, Chesa consistently reports herself, her siblings, and her classmates being hit by their parents and teachers, something she does not agree with: **"Even how small or big their sins are, they should not be spanked"** (Chesa, 2017).

Chesa's family describe her as **"loving, affectionate"** and **"not selfish"** (Chesa's mother, 2016), noting Chesa's awareness of her family's financial situation, and the maturity she shows in not asking for things they cannot afford, always sharing her food, and using her initiative: **"If we don't have cold water, she will [take initiative] to buy ice from her own money"** (Chesa's mother, 2017).

FIGURE 7: CHESA

Timeline of 'glitches' (*when* and *where*)




What if you play basketball, what do they call you? **"Tomboy."** They call you tomboy because you join basketball? **"Yes."** Are you affected when they call you tomboy? **"Not really, because it's not true."**
Does she tell you about getting scared of boys? **"No. Actually the boys are scared of her… They are afraid of her, because she moves like a boy, too."** (Mother)
"Her attitude also changed… because you cannot really advise her… If you ask her to do things that she doesn't like, she will not do it." (Mother)
Is *piko*[78] for girls only? **"Yes."** Why? **"Because if boys join us, they call them gays."**
Who do you play with? **"Girls and boys."** Is it okay for Mama and Papa that you're friends and playmates? **"Yes."** For you, is it okay for a girl and a boy to be friends? **"Yes."**
Do you think you will have a different future [to your mother]? **"Yes."** How many children do you want for the future? **"Two."** Wouldn't you like four? Just like you and your siblings? **"No, just two."**
How about you, do you see yourself getting married? **"That's still a long way off."** Around how old would you be? **"Around 100 years old." [laughs]** Why do you say that it's a long way off? **"Because I will prioritise my studies, first."**
Do you think your life now [and in the future] is what your mother has experienced? **"Much more… We [will] have lots of money and a big house, and I [will be] a teacher."**
What is your dream? **"To become a police [officer]. To be able to help our *barangay* and our country."** Who inspired you to become a police [officer]? **"Just me."**
"She wants to be a newscaster." Since when did she dream of becoming a newscaster? **"Two years ago. She really wants it, because she said it's nice to be seen on TV. She dreams really high."** (Mother)
"And she also says, 'When I finish high school, I will go to Manila, I will study there.' Her Papa says, 'You're ambitious, you have lofty dreams.'" (Mother)
What will you tell them? **"That I don't like to do it."**
"I will get scared, but I will still do it for them."
2017
2018

"I will prioritise my studies first"

As with most of the girls, Chesa does not challenge the social norm of marriage, but rather the idea that marriage is the main priority for a girl. Chesa jokes that she will get married at **"100 years old"**, clarifying that the reason she anticipates her marriage is **"still a long way off…"** is **"because I will prioritise my studies first"** (Chesa, 2018). The association of the age of marriage with their education and/or career is expressed by many girls across the three countries: **"I will first achieve my dreams"** (Christine, Philippines, 2018); **"I think a girl will get married after graduation with a good job"** (Kannitha, Cambodia, 2017); **"At about 27 or 28 years old… because at that age, their jobs are stable and they have everything ready for being engaged in a marriage"** (Hang, Vietnam, 2018). The importance of education is emphasised by parents and carers of the girls and some girls like Darna in the Philippines state that their attitudes have come directly from their parents: **"[My father] said I should have a job first before having a boyfriend…"** ["Do you also want to get married someday?"] **"Yes, but only when I'm done with my studies [and have] got a job"** (Darna, 2018).

Chesa's family is very supportive of her education and future: **"I told her to pursue her dreams. As long as we can support them (the children), we will"** (Chesa's mother, Philippines, 2017), and Chesa herself holds strong attitudes regarding the importance of education: **"It's more important to have education than follow orders"** (Chesa, Philippines, 2017). It is also clear in her offer to go to Manila to work that Chesa is aware of the financial constraints of her family, and both she and her mother discuss the practicalities of Chesa needing to work whilst studying at university, which indicate that these are not solely aspirations or 'dreams' but future plans which can be achieved as long as certain conditions are met – financial support being one and avoidance of early marriage being another.

"I'll be more independent"

Two of the Cohort girls in Vietnam state that they do not want to get married at all, including Ly in Vietnam, whose mother is a single parent and who simply explains that this is **"because I don't like it"** (Ly, Vietnam, 2018), while Huong expands on her similar sentiments to Ly to critique the gendered roles she is aware of: **"Being alone is happier, I'll be more independent. If I had a husband, I would have to do a lot of things and do everything according to my husband's wishes"** (Huong, Vietnam, 2018). In 2017, Huong reported being told by her mother, **"If I did not do the chores, when I got married I would be hit by my husband's mother"** (Huong, 2017) and is aware that the reason she has more household work to do than her brother is because she is a girl. Both Huong's experience of a gendered division of labour and her awareness of these future expectations appear to have influenced her attitude towards marriage, and on the **Individual Level**, Huong makes a judgement that for her, being "independent" means being "happier".

"I want to have a good husband"

Further, interesting statements made by the Cohort girls in relation to marriage reflect an awareness on the **Social Level** of what makes a "good husband", combined with their own **Individual Level** opinions and values. Thearika in Cambodia aspires to have **"a good husband who helps do housework and makes happiness in family"** (Thearika, Cambodia, 2018). While Thearika has lived with her grandfather since 2016, during the time that she lived with her parents, her mother reported that she and her husband took turns cooking – one of

the few households in the Cambodia Cohort where males were reported to carry out this traditionally 'female' task, even though the rest of the housework was carried out by Thearika's mother. Exploring Thearika's attitude further, in 2018 she also stated, **"I want to have a good husband who doesn't drink or make argument(s). We should be able to console each other"** (Thearika, 2018).

Trinh in Vietnam expressed a similar view with regard to her future where she aspires to have a "good life": **"A good life could be having a husband who is not [involved with] gambling or alcohol; my family's economy is stable"** (Trinh, Vietnam, 2017). In Trinh's case, it is apparent that experience with her father's behaviour under the influence of alcohol has influenced this aspiration: **"In my village, there is a man who often drinks alcohol. He usually goes around in the village. I do not like him. Almost every day he is drunk… When my father is drunk, he is similar to that man"** (Trinh, Vietnam, 2017). Uyen in Vietnam also expressed a similar attitude: **"My family will be stable, my children [will be] obedient, my husband will not drink alcohol"** (Uyen, Vietnam, 2018). Uyen lives between her aunt's and maternal grandparents' houses, and her mother splits her time between Uyen's grandparents' home and her new

Box 10 Alcoholism and domestic violence

World Health Organisation data shows that in all three contexts men consume significantly more alcohol than women. In Vietnam, the levels of alcohol consumption have risen for both sexes in recent years, while they have decreased in the Philippines.

Country	Overall average (15+) consumption – litres of pure alcohol per capita		Male (15+) consumption – litres of pure alcohol per capita		Female (15+) consumption – litres of pure alcohol per capita	
Cambodia[79]	4.6 (2003-05)	5.5 (2008-10)	-	9.6 (2008-10)	-	1.7 (2008-10)
Philippines[80]	7.1 (2010)	6.6 (2016)	12.1 (2010)	11.3 (2016)	2.2 (2010)	1.9 (2016)
Vietnam[81]	4.7 (2010)	8.3 (2016)	8.2 (2010)	14.5 (2016)	1.3 (2010)	2.5 (2016)

A study by the Asia Foundation in Cambodia found that men were more likely to report using alcohol for social purposes than women: 43 per cent and 20 per cent respectively, and that men regarded it as an important aspect of their social and professional life, while women did not.[82] The recent rise in alcoholism and binge drinking in Vietnam has been described as "alarming",[83] with research into the highly gendered statistics finding links between harmful norms of 'masculinity' and the increase in alcohol consumption. Binge drinking, encouraged by social and professional pressures for men to consume alcohol, has also been linked to high rates of domestic violence in Vietnam, where 34 per cent of ever-married women report being subjected to physical or sexual violence by their husbands at some point in their life.[84]

husband's home. In 2018, Uyen also said that her life will be different to her mother's because, **"I only want to get married once and I will have a happy family with good children"** (Uyen, Vietnam, 2018), while her mother predicted that Uyen will have different priorities in the future: **"Her dream will be to marry a rich husband later"** (Uyen's mother, Vietnam, 2018). While there are no specific reports from Uyen or her family that suggest the men in the home drink alcohol, in both Vietnam and Cambodia girls and female carers highlight issues involving men drinking alcohol and the impacts of this: **"In this village, women do everything, and support men. Men get together to drink after work. So, women do all housework"** (Lina's grandmother, Cambodia, 2017); **"The women are at disadvantages more than men. The men hit their wives when being drunk. It will be ok for some families if then they can find a solution to the problem. If not, they will be separated"** (Chau's mother, Vietnam, 2017).

2.3.2 Having children

What are the expectations related to having children?

In the three contexts, the dominant norms in relation to childbearing are that a) the girls will have children at some point in their life, and b) childbearing will happen within marriage. Interestingly, in Vietnam, a few Cohort parents express attitudes towards women having children outside of marriage that suggest single mothers are increasingly accepted by a changing society and just three out of 18 parents agree or strongly agree with the statement that pregnancy outside of marriage is worse for girls than boys, compared to seven out of ten of the Cambodian parents and four out of 11 of the Filipino parents (see Figure 8 below): **"Unmarried women still have children, that is normal. In the community, there are some cases and they are accepted by the community"** (Kieu's mother, Vietnam, 2018); **"It is the modern age now, so it is not required to get married before having a child. If a girl feels she does not need a husband but she needs to have a child, she will legally have right to do that. We should not have unfair thoughts. The society has developed, so there should be openness for people"** (Thom's mother, Vietnam, 2018).

The Cohort girls express strong attitudes concerning the number and sex of children they would like to have, raising questions about knowledge of and access to family planning, and the influence of gendered norms on son preference, inheritance practices, and parents' expectations of sons and daughters later in life.

How and why are girls challenging these expectations?

"Just two"

A recurring response in many of the girls' discussions of their future – whether relating to their career or family – is that they aspire to have different lives to those of their mothers. Chesa offers an example of where this relates to having children: ["How many children do you want for the future?"] **"Two."** ["Don't you like four? Just like you and your siblings?"] **"No, just two"** (Chesa, Philippines, 2017). A number of other girls express similar aspirations, and across the three contexts the most common predicted number of future children the girls describe is **"two only"** (Reyna, Philippines, 2017), which contrasts in particular with the average number of children per household in the Philippines Cohort families (4.5), while the average is 3.33 in

Box 11 Indicators on fertility in Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam

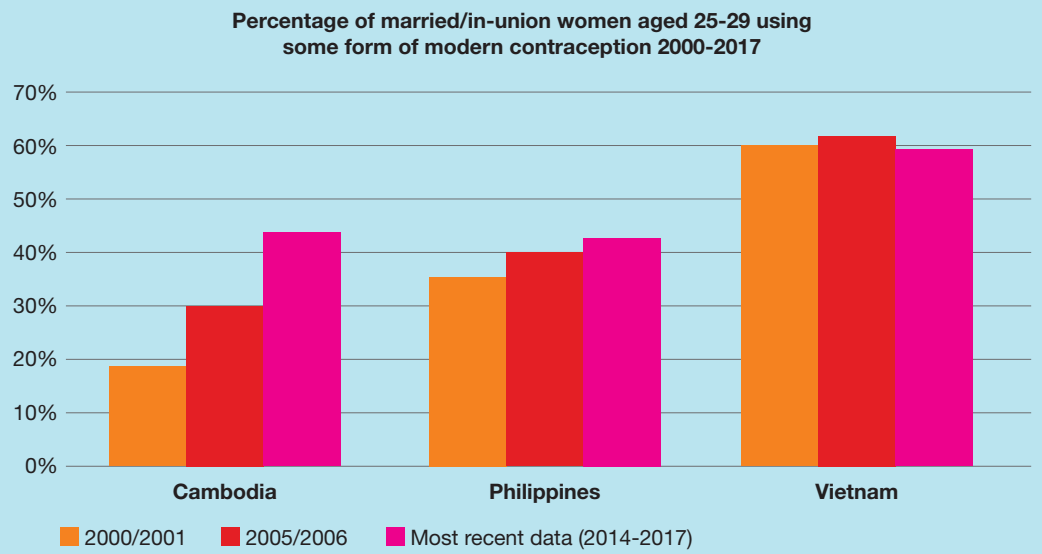
Average number of children per woman:[85]

Country	2000	2006 (birth year of Cohort girls)	2015
Cambodia	3.81	3.16	2.59
Philippines	3.81	3.43	2.96
Vietnam	2.01	1.89	1.96

Average age at first pregnancy:

Cambodia (2014) – 22.9[86]
Philippines (2017) – 22.8[87]
Vietnam – no data available

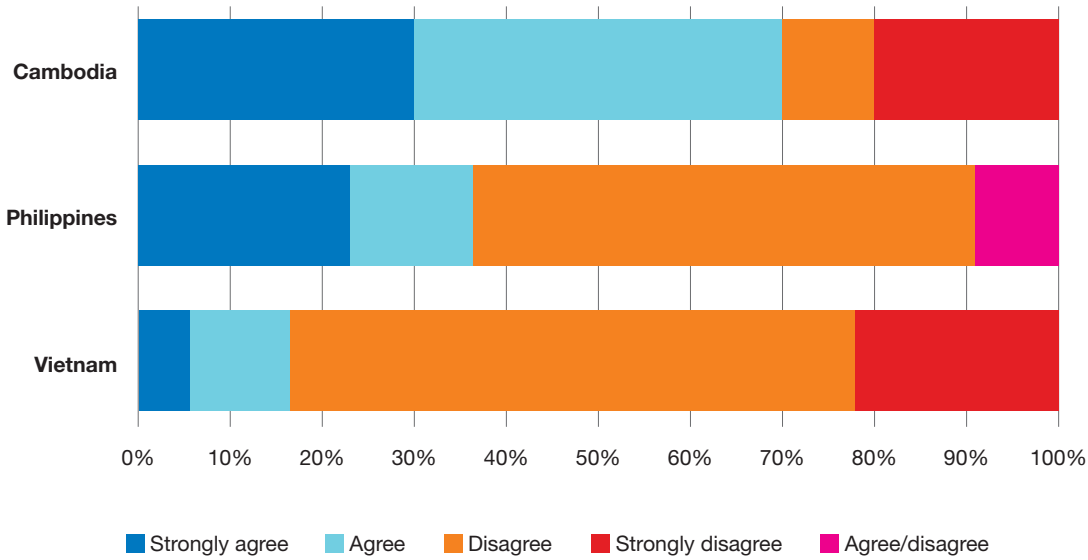
Contraceptive prevalence:[88]



Unmet need for family planning:

Country	Married or in-union women %[89]	Unmarried sexually active women %[90]
Cambodia	12.5 (2014)	-
Philippines	17.5 (2013)	49 (2017)
Vietnam	6.1 (2013)	-

Figure 8 Parent/carer attitudes: "It is worse for a girl to have a child outside of marriage than for a boy", 2018-2019



the Cambodia Cohort families, and 2.37 in the Vietnam Cohort families.

Other girls who do not specify the number of children outline instead that they will simply be fewer than the number their mothers had: **"My life will be different. I can't predict [the] future job or number of children I will have, though. I don't want to do my mum's job. I don't even prefer to have as many children as my mum"** (Davy, Cambodia, 2018). Girls like Trinh in Vietnam attribute this attitude to their awareness on the **Social Level** of the negative impacts that having many children can bring: **"I don't want to have as many children as my mother has, I can see my mother's [life] is so hard"** (Trinh, Vietnam, 2018).

On the **Structural Level**, the average number of children per woman in all three countries has decreased over the past two decades (see Box 11), with the median number of children in the Cohort households slightly higher than the respective national averages – particularly in the Philippines. Access to reproductive healthcare and contraception is central to family planning and to the Cohort girls' potential to realise their aspirations of having a smaller family. Contraceptive prevalence is highest in Vietnam (see Box 11) – due in part to the two-child policy in place since the 1960s – at 75.7 per cent (2015), and lowest in the Philippines at 54.1 per cent (2017), with Cambodia showing slightly higher levels at 56.3 per cent (2014).[91]

"One boy and one girl"

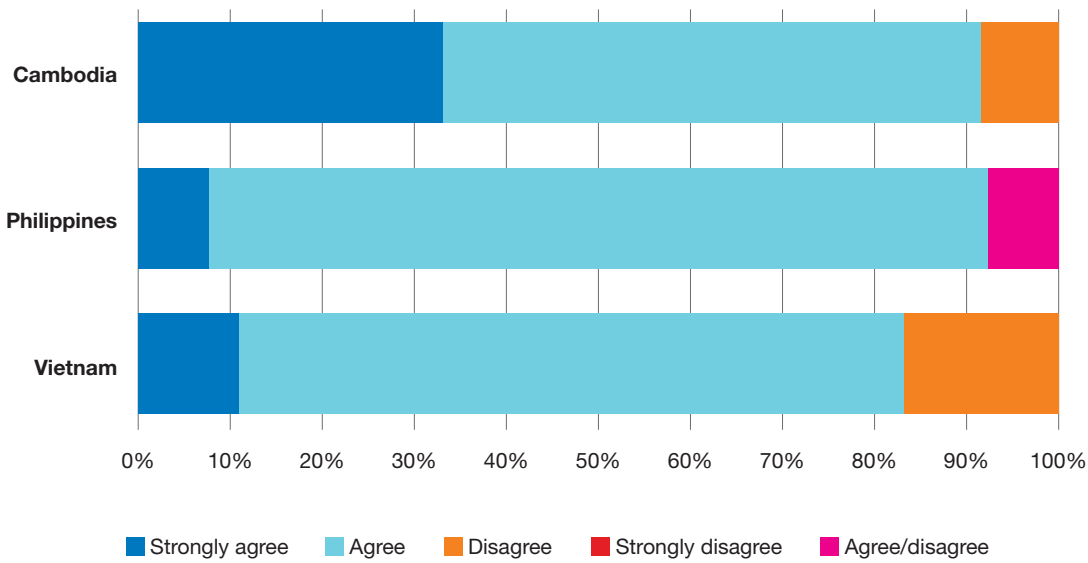
A small number of girls who specify wanting "just two" children in the future further state the sex of the children they predict they will have and in doing so reiterate norms relating to gendered roles in the household: ["How many children will you have?"] **"Boy and girl. Two only."** ["Why?"] **"The girl can cook. The boy can help in the farm."** ["So, if you will have a family in the future, they will also do the same as what you do now?"] **"Yes."** ["So, your boy child will help in the farm while your girl child will help in the house chores?"] **"Yes"** (Reyna, Philippines, 2017). In Vietnam, Ly's intention to have **"one boy and one girl"** (2016)

apparently comes from exposure to gendered expectations around the future role of children and their differing duties towards their parents in old age on the **Social Level**: **"The girl next door says if there are two girls, there will be no one to take care of their parents after they get married"** (Ly, Vietnam, 2016). This is notable as while Ly's mother herself does not express this view, Ly is an only child and may be aware of the potential social and financial implications of her being female for her mother in the future.

Across the three contexts, attitudes towards who is expected to look after parents in old age differ (see Figure 9), something which can be demonstrated by the impacts of such attitudes on inheritance practices. In the Vietnam Cohort, although described by many participants as an outdated or obsolete practice, son preference is a dominant attitude in most parents and caregivers, who indicate that inheritance of land and assets will go to their sons a) because their daughters are expected to marry and live with their husbands' families: **"I think that according to the custom, when girls get married they must follow up their husband and look after their husband's house. Therefore, I do not want to put pressure on my daughter to look after me and my husband when we get older"** (Huong's mother, Vietnam, 2018), and b) because their sons are expected to take on the traditional role of "ancestor worship": **"It is right to give my son more property than daughters: he has to take care of worshipping the ancestors and forefather's graves. So, my son is more important than my daughter"** (Uyen's grandfather, Vietnam, 2015).

In Cambodia, attitudes towards inheritance are mixed, with many parents/carers stating that they plan to divide assets equally between children, while a number indicate inheritance will be split according to which of their children looks after them in the future: **"The burden is on the child who stays with us when getting old"** (Leakhena's father, Cambodia, 2017). While in the Philippines, almost all parents or carers say that they plan for their children to inherit equally and expect both to look after them in the future – if they are able to.

Figure 9 Parent/carer attitudes: "I expect my daughter to look after me in old age", 2018-2019



2.4 GIRLS' RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

The SEA Cohort girls demonstrate a high number of 'glitches' when discussing two areas in particular: their education and career aspirations, and their attitudes towards the division of labour at home and school. They often strongly express attitudes about the importance of education, studying at university, and career prospects. In the girls' and their parents'/carers' responses, an emphasis is placed on the girls doing 'something different' and 'something better' than their parents' occupation.

> **"If she goes to school, it will be easier for her to get a job in the future. If not, she will have to work hard as a farmer."**
> (Sen's mother, Vietnam, 2017)

> **"I want her to pursue higher education despite any challenges."**
> (Mony's mother, Philippines, 2017).

> **"I think if Leakhena wishes to further her education, I will make her finish [a] Bachelor's degree. I think education is very important to make [a] living in the current society."**
> (Leakhena's father, Cambodia, 2017)

> **"I want my daughter to be different from me. I want her to be educated so that she will not be as stupid as me."**
> (Bopha's mother, Philippines, 2017)

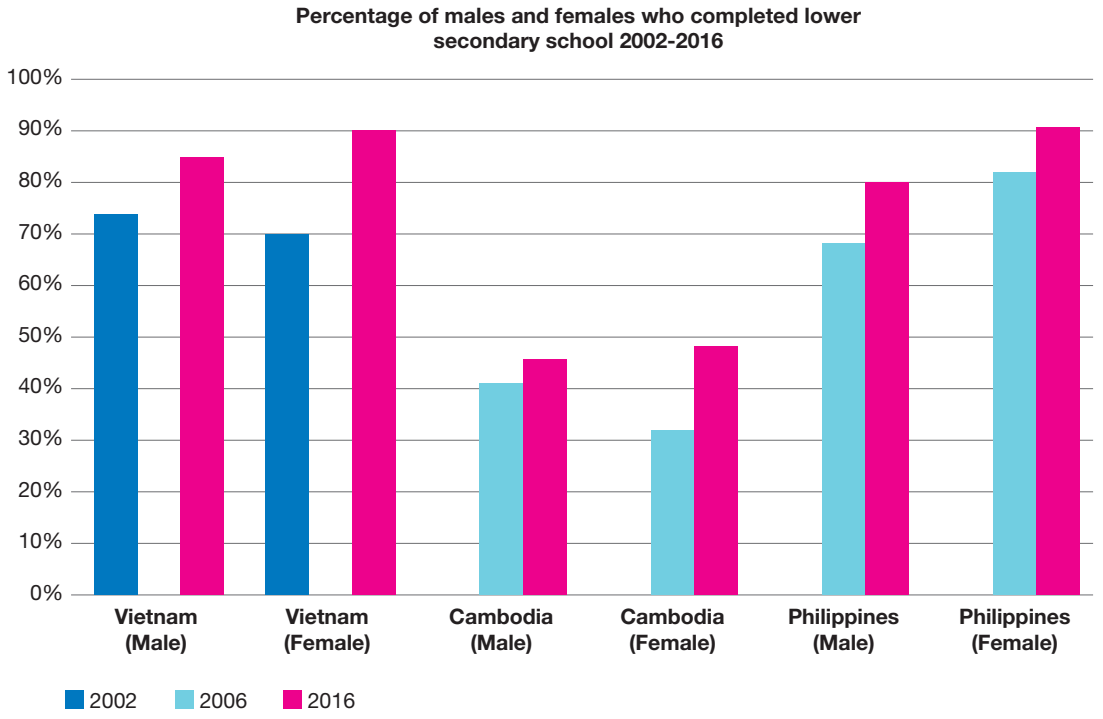
> **"My children must graduate from university before going to work."**
> (Thom's mother, Vietnam, 2017)

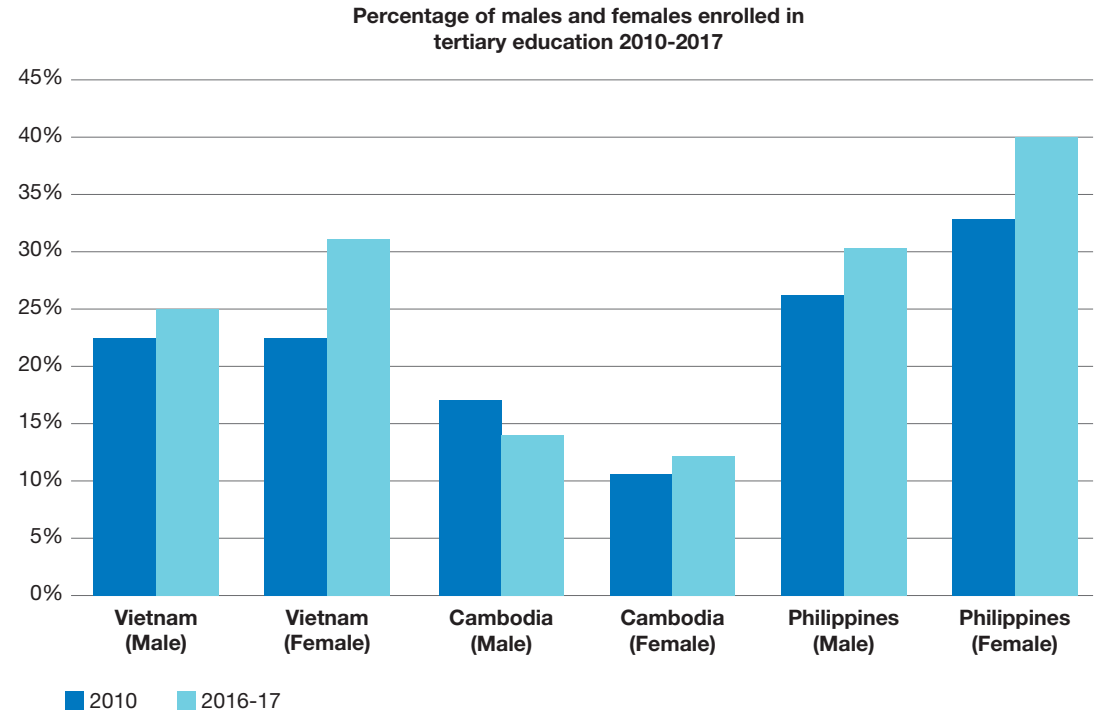
While this is a very positive sign, it is unclear if these aspirations match up to the realities of access to higher education and professional employment (see Figure 10 below).

The dominant norm in the three contexts with regard to household work is that responsibilities are split according to gender, with the majority of the girls reporting an increase in their allocated work in the last three years. The girls demonstrate a range of 'glitches' in this area, from identifying differences in the type of work they and their male peers are required to do, and disparities in the way girls and boys therefore spend their time: **"Girls have chores because they're always at home; boys aren't always home and are always out"** (Dolores, Philippines, 2018); to verbally challenging this norm: **"I just feel that my elder brother should help do housework. I bet I can have more time to play and study if he help[ed] with housework"** (Davy, Cambodia, 2018).

What is interesting about both of these areas is the language used by girls and their family members when expressing their attitudes. Across the three contexts, but predominantly in Vietnam and Cambodia, the rhetoric of "rights" and "equality"[92] stands out in justifications of behaviour and explanations of attitudes regarding access to education, the division of labour, and women's roles in the home and in public life. Exploring the use of this language raises questions regarding where the rhetoric originates from and if it is evidence of impacts from **Structural Level** policies, or government/non-government programmes, why it is dominant in Vietnam in particular, and whether the words have any depth in terms of reflecting true attitudes and behaviours.

Figure 10 Education statistics in Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam[93,94]





2.4.1 Equality in education

Girls and their family members in Vietnam and Cambodia frequently refer to "equality" either in terms of how things *should* be or how things currently are, in relation to girls' and boys' access to education: **"Girls and boys should be educated, that is equality"** (Tan, Vietnam, 2018); [on school attendance] **"There should be gender equality. We should not discriminate between boys and girls"** (Tan's mother, Vietnam, 2017); **"All children should learn the same things because we have equal rights"** (Reaksmey, Cambodia, 2017). Use of the word "discrimination" is also common in both Vietnam and Cambodia, **"[It is important that girls and boys learn the same things at school] because boys and girls are equal now and they have [the] right to go to school. If they are not allowed to go to school, they will feel [that it is] discriminatory"** (Hoa, Vietnam, 2017). Roumany highlights that she learned this concept from her teacher: **"I think boys and girls should all go to school because the teacher tells us not to discriminate against each other"** (Roumany, Cambodia, 2017).

Hang in Vietnam expresses an awareness that this is different – and an improvement – from the past: **"This is the era of equality. Boys and girls both can go to school. There is no discrimination like in the past that boys could go to school while girls couldn't"** (Hang, Vietnam, 2017); **"There was discrimination between boys and girls in feudal society long time ago. Now it is equal society, so both genders can go to school and their going to school are equally important"** (Hang, Vietnam, 2018). It is notable that in all three SEA countries enrolment and completion of both primary and secondary education has increased in the past 20 years for both boys and girls (see Figure 10), but more significantly, in all three contexts girls' completion and/or literacy rates have overtaken those of boys in the past decade. While Hang acknowledges that in the past it was less likely that girls would gain an education, there is a sense from some girls that when discussing equal access and rights to education they are referring to an awareness that many boys in their communities are less engaged at school, and more likely to skip or drop out of school: **"The girls are hard-working… the boys are [distracting]… [They] don't take their studies seriously"** (Mahalia, Philippines, 2018), and some indicate that school attendance is more important for boys because of this: **"[It is more important] for the boys… because they are always late in studying… the girls are not late"** (Reyna, Philippines, 2016).

Conversely, Uyen in Vietnam identifies a double standard with regards to the emphasis on girls' education: **"…if boys are absent from school, or drop out from school, they will have a job when they grow up. [But] girls who are absent from school will be called as follows: 'You are girls but why you are lazy, why you do not go to school?' and something like that"** (Uyen, Vietnam, 2018). Uyen's point underlines another theme in some gendered attitudes towards education and careers – wherein boys are expected to carry out manual or non-professional work, therefore rendering their educational attainment less important: **"My son is not good at learning and I tell him 'Well, you should study to get a vocational certificate. Just [that].' Hoa is better at learning, so I tell her to continue to study"** (Hoa's father, Vietnam, 2017). Some parents demonstrate this indirectly by showing less concern and lower expectations over their sons' education: **"I trust my daughters to finish school. But I am really not expecting that from my sons"** (Maricel's mother, Philippines, 2017).

Box 12 The rhetoric of equality and rights

On the **Social Level**, almost all girls who use "equality" or "rights" rhetoric with regard to gender have a parent or carer who has expressed similar attitudes with similar language:

> **"[Boys and girls] should learn the same things… Because everyone should be equal with each other."**
> (Oanh, Vietnam, 2017)

> **"Boys and girls all are human beings and have equal rights."**
> (Oanh's father, Vietnam, 2018)

> **"Boys and girls can all go to school because we have equal rights."**
> (Thearika, Cambodia, 2017)

> ["Boys should have more freedoms than girls"] **"I disagree with this statement because boys and girls have equal rights."**
> (Thearika's grandfather, Cambodia, 2018)

Interestingly, an area where "rights" language is frequently used – by female parents and carers in particular – is when discussing women's decision making in the home:

> ["Do you think women have equal say in how money is spent in your family?"]
> **"Men and women have equal rights and roles."**
> (Reaksmey's mother, Cambodia, 2018)

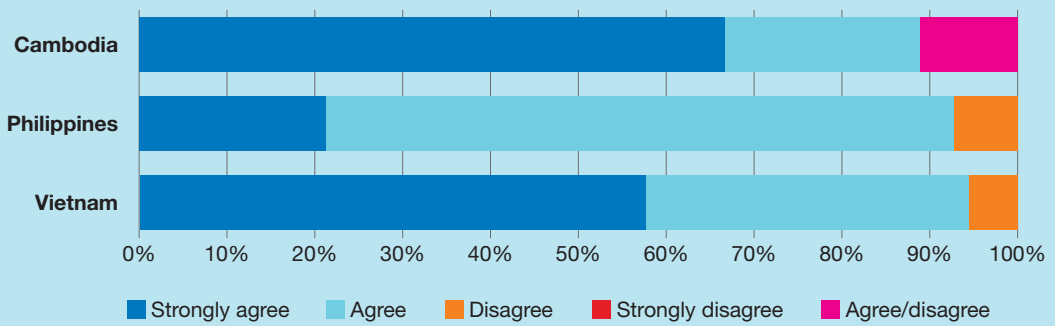
> **"Women have rights because women can work and if they are housekeeper, they also do jobs at home. So, they should have right to make decision."**
> (Roumany's grandmother, Cambodia, 2018)

Further, in response to the statement "Women can lead a country", which the majority of respondents – both male and female – agree with, many parents/carers refer to "equality":

> **"I think it is equal now. Not only men but women can do everything."**
> (Thom's mother, Vietnam, 2018)

> **"I strongly agree with this statement because men and women have equal rights. It is just a matter of their ability"**
> (Thearika's grandfather, Cambodia, 2018)

Figure 11 Parent/carer attitudes: "Women can lead a country", 2018-2019



2.4.2 Gendered division of labour

The majority of the Cohort households in Vietnam, Cambodia, and the Philippines describe some level of a gendered division of labour – both in terms of the 'type' of work that is appropriate for males and females, with "heavy" tasks allocated to boys and men because they are "strong", while household work such as cleaning, cooking, and childcare are described as "female work", and in terms of a disparity in the quantity of work allocated, where women and girls carry the main burden. The Cohort girls express a variety of attitudes regarding the division of labour in their homes, schools, and communities and while many have demonstrated some level of 'glitch' in this area, the majority of 'glitches' remain on the verbal 'identifying differences' level rather than explicit criticism of the norm. On the **Social Level**, a significant number of households in the three contexts claim that the males in the house are happy to carry out 'female' tasks, however there is often a clear disjuncture, if not contradiction, between these statements and the distribution of tasks described by family members and the girls. In particular, parent and carer responses to the statement "Boys and girls should have the same household responsibilities" suggest that there is a prevalence of gender-progressive attitudes, with many using the language of "equality" when explaining their response:

> **"Strongly agree. I think boys and girls are equal. There [should be] no discrimination."**
> (Huong's mother, Vietnam, 2018)

> **"I strongly agree with this statement because boys and girls have equal ability and can help each other."**
> (Leakhena's mother, Cambodia, 2018)

> **"Agree. Yes, they should be equals."**
> (Darna's father, Philippines, 2018)

Exploring Darna's case further, it is apparent that these attitudes do not reflect the real situation in the household. In 2018, Darna explains how she gets angry with her older brother because he goes to play basketball while she has to clean: **"I feel it is unfair."** Darna reiterates gendered norms regarding the division of labour: ["Do you think women should do house chores?"] **"Yes, because they are the women, the light of the home… My brothers will do the heavy tasks in the house"** (2018), yet also acknowledges that this is not what always happens **"because [my brother is] not in the house when he has something to do like when we need to fetch water. He goes directly to the basketball court. Sometimes I fetch water"** (2018), describing a situation where she is also required to carry out "male" work. There is the suggestion here that the use of "equality" and "rights" rhetoric is not reflecting true attitudes, or behavioural change. If parents and carers are demonstrating social desirability bias it would be interesting to investigate why this type of language is so prevalent and where it is coming from.



PLAN INTERNATIONAL CAMBODIA

Watering crops in Cambodia, 2018

Box 13 Fathers' views on gender equality

A number of the Cohort girls' fathers express progressive gender attitudes, suggesting that they challenge harmful gendered norms, or have the potential to do so. However, while men like Leakhena's father in Cambodia (explored below) express these attitudes there is little evidence that they are reflected in their behaviour or are having any impact on their daughters' lives.

Leakhena's father is a police officer in his community and talks about the dangers of gender inequality, yet both he and Leakhena also have very strong gendered attitudes, suggesting that Leakhena's father is speaking empty words or possible demonstrating social desirability bias:

> **"I think we can change it if we learn about gender. Nowadays, they don't know about gender, or their rights. If they are well-informed, they can reduce domestic violence or discrimination against gender."**
> (Leakhena's father, Cambodia, 2017)

> **"Some families have labour division. Some husbands are too tired after work, so women do housework. Some men don't like housework, but some help do housework. Some husbands wait for their wives to cook. If their wives cannot cook on time, they will blame, or beat them. This is the root of violence. I am a violence mediator."**
> (Leakhena's father, Cambodia, 2017)

Despite this, Leakhena's mother describes a gendered division of labour in the home:

> **"[Leakhena] cleans [the] house, washes dishes and clothes, cooks rice, and helps sell my groceries… My son never helps with housework."**
> (Leakhena's mother, Cambodia, 2018)

Leakhena herself reiterates the norm of a gendered division of labour, making an interesting distinction between home and school:

> **"I think girls and boys should do the same school chores, but we can do different tasks at home."** ["Why?"] **"At home, boys can chop and collect heavy wood."**
> (Leakhena, Cambodia, 2017)

Michelle's father, in the Philippines, describes behaviour which appears to challenge gender roles which see women bearing the burden of household labour due to it being classed as "female work":

> **"Men can also do house chores like doing the laundry, cooking rice, sweeping the floor. I also did those when I was young, I washed clothes for my parents because my older sisters were studying away. And I still do it now. Men can do house chores."**
> (Michelle's father, Philippines, 2018)

Yet, Michelle herself describes a different situation and reiterates a gendered attitude with regard to household work:



PLAN INTERNATIONAL CAMBODIA

Tending to crops in Cambodia, 2018

> ["Do your older brother or father wash clothes too?"] **"No… Because they are boys."**
> (Michelle, Philippines, 2018)

Oanh's father in Vietnam, however, appears to put his attitudes into practice with Oanh describing how he carries out much of the housework due to the fact that her mother goes out to work all day:

> **"My family is different, men as well as women can do everything. We can cook, wash clothes. If we can do, we will do everything. They are all the same for both boys and girls."**
> (Oanh's father, Vietnam, 2017)

> **"My mom goes to work to earn money, my father is at home and does the chores around the house."**
> (Oanh, Vietnam, 2017)

In this case, the combined influence of Oanh's close relationship with her father, the employment of her mother, and her father's willingness to carry out non-normative gender roles may be influencing Oanh's attitude on not discriminating between boys' and girls' education, her belief that friendships and play between boys and girls is fine, and her aspirations to get a Master's degree in science or medicine.

> **"Many women are capable of acting as directors so it's wrong when we criticise the women. The women take a very important role in the success of families. They have equal roles in caring for children, developing economics, making family to have a happy life."**
> (Oanh's father, Vietnam, 2017)

3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the *Real Choices, Real Lives* data from the three SEA countries – Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam – highlights the strength of gendered expectations, alongside the potential for these to be questioned, challenged, or resisted by girls and their families. As with the first report in the series, this second regionally-focused report provides insight into moments where girls verbally express an attitude or describe a behaviour that reflects a deviance from the norm and/or aspirations towards "something different". This was prominently expressed in terms of girls' appearance, behaviour and interactions with boys, as well as their future roles. Here, the longitudinal view of our data and its emphasis on girls' own experiences provides a unique perspective in exploring the gender socialisation process. Whilst we recognise that these expressions may not always translate into 'disruptive' action or behaviour in practice, identifying 'glitches' is important because they represent the first step, and a degree of 'consciousness raising' in the process of disrupting gendered social norms.

Although it has not been explicitly (or systematically) referenced in this report, we can already see areas of commonality and variation between the SEA and the SSA contexts. For example, the particular social and economic structures in Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam evidently have a bearing not only on what/how norms are expressed, but also on what grounds and to what extent they are questioned/contested. We will build from this foundation to undertake analysis of the LAC data in our final regionally-focused report as well as to then explore and synthesise different factors influencing the extent to which norms are questioned across the study. Drawing from across all three regionally-focused reports, we will consider the policy and programme interventions that might be most effective in supporting girls' resistance and building transformative change.

3.1.1 Early adolescence as a period of identity formation and heightened awareness of gendered norms

Looking longitudinally, we can see that between 2016 and 2018, the majority of 'glitches' demonstrated by the SEA Cohort girls consist of noticing differences in expectations for males and females and the verbal expression of attitudes which contest gendered norms. While this highlights that only a minority of the Cohort girls demonstrate active, non-conforming behaviours, it also points to a heightened awareness in the girls of the social norms around them. This suggests the significance of early adolescence in relation to influencing gendered norm change.

The SEA Cohort girls describe the impacts of gendered norms on:

i. how they and their male peers spend time – noticing that boys have more time to play due to having less household responsibilities;
ii. how they and their male peers are expected to behave – noticing non-conformity in their own behaviour and appearance and identifying it as

'masculine', and in others as associated with homosexuality;

iii how they and their male peers are disciplined – noticing that boys are often subject to harsher punishments and that their bad behaviour at home and school is often seen as a foregone conclusion;

iv how they and their male peers access spaces in the community – noticing that real or perceived risks of GBV restrict their own movement but not that of boys;

v how they imagine their futures to be – noticing that education is vital for girls and associating this with delayed marriage for girls, while the age that boys marry is regarded as less important.

In this way, adolescence is both a period when gendered roles and expectations are emphasised by family and society, and a period when girls are increasingly aware of gendered norms and their consequences – making it an ideal moment, before attitudes are ingrained, to disrupt the gender socialisation process.



PLAN INTERNATIONAL VIETNAM

Drawing her social network in Vietnam, 2018

3.1.2 Understanding the full social context of a girl is crucial in identifying where there is potential for gender norm change

On the **Social Level**, while family members are often the central source of the reproduction of gendered norms in children, we can see that in the SEA Cohort they also demonstrate the potential to challenge gendered norms. Across the three contexts, a number of mothers and female carers express attitudes which critique gendered norms, and some households describe how female employment, migration, separation, or widowhood, has led to an upheaval of traditional gendered roles within the home. For example, taking on 'male' responsibilities due to the absence of a male. The Cohort girls in these cases are often exposed to gender non-normative behaviour and even where this is borne from necessity rather than choice, it represents the potential for lasting change in attitudes, behaviours, and expectations. The SEA Cohort data also demonstrates the potential influence of fathers who express attitudes which appear to challenge gendered norms; however, the translation of these attitudes into changed behaviours and the disruption of gendered norms is less evident.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL CAMBODIA



Collecting firewood in Cambodia, 2018

In the wider community, two points of influence stand out in the SEA Cohort data: school and social spaces, for internet access in particular. Differences in treatment and harshness of punishment of boys and girls at school perpetuates gendered norms around expectations of behaviour and associations of boys with violence and aggression. Many of the SEA Cohort girls report noticing these differences in treatment, as well as some who describe taking on these negative 'male' characteristics to express their challenging of restrictive gendered norms. The Cohort girls' awareness of the inequity of these gendered norms demonstrates the potential to change harmful discipline practices and expectations of 'masculinity', but if such norms are left unaddressed their adoption of negative characteristics and the normalisation of violence in males could ingrain norms which lead to GBV. In Vietnam, in particular, girls' access to technology and the internet is more restricted than boys' due to the gendering of spaces like internet cafes and parents' fears of girls' exposure to violence. Girls who notice or critique these limitations of their movement and ability to access the internet show the potential for norm change; however, real, or perceived, risks of GBV in their communities represent a significant obstacle in the disruption of these norms, as to do so could mean the girls are put in danger.

3.1.3 Evidence of potential for Structural Level law and policy to influence gender norm change

A number of findings from the SEA Cohort reflect wider national trends and suggest a level of effectiveness in national law and policy on issues such as child and early marriage, education, and equality and rights rhetoric. Progress in the reduction of child and early marriage including the criminalisation of child marriage in these contexts appears to have had some impact on the attitudes of girls and their family members where they reiterate the illegality of child marriage, refer to the minimum legal age of 18, and prioritise girls' education and career over marriage and children. Many of the girls express an aspiration to have a smaller family than their own – specifying that they would like to have 'just two' children. This reflects fertility trends in the three countries which have seen the median number of children per woman drop to below four in the past 25 years.[95] The government push to make education central to the national consciousness of Vietnam can be seen in the girls' and their families' prioritisation of education and aspirations of higher education. Similarly, the use of equality and rights rhetoric, in relation to education and the division of labour, used by the Cohort girls and their families in Vietnam and Cambodia suggests a trickle-down effect from either national, international, or regional policy and programming on gender equality.

There are, however, indications of the limitations of law and policy in practice, such as the prevalent use of corporal punishment in schools – reported by the girls despite its use being illegal within school settings in all three contexts – which perpetuates harmful gendered norms associating males with violence. In Vietnam, the tradition of son preference – including sex selective abortion, which is an illegal practice – is largely described by the Cohort families as obsolete; however, some girls still reiterate gendered norms which specify the sex of children they would prefer to have, as well as the future roles of sons and daughters in terms of inheritance practices and parent care in old age. Parental concern in the Philippines in particular about male-female friendships and early pregnancy reflects high adolescent birth rates in the country, with 49 per cent of unmarried sexually active women and 17 per cent of married or in-union women having an unmet need for family planning,[96] despite apparent attempts by the government to make access to contraception easier.[97]



PLAN INTERNATIONAL PHILIPPINES

Coming home from school in the Philippines, 2018

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Drawing on our evidence, we provide a number of recommendations which are broadly framed, but relevant to those working in relation to gender and adolescence. Additionally, we outline a number of specific research areas to support the design of future gender transformative programming.

3.2.1 Recommendations for donors and practitioners

Types of interventions to fund

In the context of existing efforts, these recommendations are aimed at donors and practitioners to support the integration of gender transformative approaches through considering the duration and design of interventions. The recommendations are relevant across sectors, for example, from education to ending child marriage.

- **Intervene earlier:** recognising the significance of adolescence as a period of identity formation and both heightened awareness of gender development as well as expectations related to gender development during this time, pre-adolescent intervention provides opportunities to influence development before these are ingrained.
- **Continue to support authorities to increase investment in key public services to ensure they are gender responsive:** identifying those that have an impact on realising gender equality outcomes for youth in particular, such as, for example, encouraging access to education and prohibiting child marriage, as well as increasing access to sexual and reproductive health services.
- **Employ adaptive programming approaches that allow for risk, failure, and learning:** recognising that social norm change is complex and multi-faceted, and that interventions will need to be responsive to changing dynamics.
- **Commit to sustained, long-term interventions throughout adolescence:** recognising that social norm change takes time and is unlikely to be accomplished in short-term project cycles.
- **Invest in and allow time for formative research:** to aid understanding of which norms are most relevant for particular behaviours, who are the key reference groups, and which norms may be most susceptible to influence or change.

Programme components

The below recommendations point to more sector-specific components of interventions to support gender transformative change. We acknowledge that there are other components that are important for supporting gender transformative change within and across specific sectors/types of intervention. However, those listed below are drawn from evidence presented by the SEA Cohort girls and their response to the framing of the *Real Choices, Real Lives* areas of enquiry.

- Prioritise girls' education and promote gender equal practices in schools.
- Place restrictions on the representation of women and girls in mass media which perpetuate harmful beauty standards.
- Invest in comprehensive sexuality education for adolescents ***and parents*** to enable girls to challenge gender norms and build healthy relationships with their male peers without risk.
- Ensure the provision of contraception and safe abortion for adolescents to enable

them to have control over their bodies, and access to family planning services.
- Continue to prioritise reducing child and early marriage by addressing the multiple causal factors and raising awareness of its illegality.
- Work with communities and authorities to ensure freedom from violence, safe mobility, and access to spaces for girls and women, and promote communication at both family and community level to question/challenge the links between gendered norms and GBV and corporal punishment.
- Invest in programmes which reduce the prevalence of son preference and work to change inheritance policies/laws which may perpetuate these norms.
- Ensure equal access to technology for girls and boys and invest in safe spaces at school or in the community where both can benefit from access to the internet.
- Create safe spaces at home and in school for girls and for boys to challenge gender norms, build mutual understanding, and express themselves outside the constraints of harmful gendered stereotypes.
- Work with family members, and fathers in particular, on the translation of attitudes into changed behaviours so that girls have full access to the 'rights' and 'equality' that these family members claim to support.

3.2.2 Building the evidence base for future programming

- Explore the role of **Structural Level** influences in terms of where law and policy appear to work/trickle down (rights and equality rhetoric, focus on education) and where they don't, or the degree to which they do is limited (e.g. corporal punishment).
- Relatedly, explore further how the use of legal rhetoric helps to dismantle gendered marriage norms.
- Understand the ways in which the family and household does or could take part in the process of translating attitudes which challenge gender norms into behaviours which transform gender norms.



PLAN INTERNATIONAL VIETNAM

Hanging out the washing in Vietnam, 2017

ANNEX ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES STUDY AND SUMMARY OF DATA

Background and study design

Overview: *Real Choices, Real Lives* is a longitudinal cohort study tracking the lives of girls from their birth in 2006, until they turn 18 in 2024. The study is being conducted in nine countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. It is embedded in a feminist research perspective and builds on a life-course approach exploring critical junctures in girls' lives and the influences of early childhood as they enter early adolescence and beyond.

Approach and methodology: The flexibility inherent in the qualitative approach has enabled us to adapt lines of enquiry in each data collection round, reflecting and building on issues present in girls' lives as they grow up. However, our methodology has remained consistent and is based around a core approach which draws, from the beginning, on in-depth interviews with caregivers and, since 2013 when they reached seven, with the girls themselves. The interviews are supported by participatory and age-appropriate methods, and we have also sought wider perspectives: through life histories with parents and interviews with other household members. We primarily focus on the girl and her immediate family but, in seeking to explore and understand gendered social norms, also include broader evidence to inform our analysis of her community and wider influences. Over the years, we will look to strengthen this – as social networks become increasingly defined in girls' lives.

To date, data collection has been undertaken on an annual basis, coordinated from Plan International UK working alongside Plan International country offices and nationally-based research teams. Data is analysed using NVivo, using a case study approach for each of the girls to support longitudinal analysis.

Sampling: *Real Choices, Real Lives* is a relatively small cohort study, with a total of 146 girls forming the original selection across all nine countries. However, there were immediate dropouts as well as deaths – reducing the number to 142 in the first years. Further, due to around half of the girls in Brazil having migrated by 2013, an additional five girls were added to the Cohort. As such, accounting for all girls (including those that have died, migrated or left the study) a total of 156 girls (and/or their families) have at some point been involved. By 2018, a total of 119 girls were actively participating in the study (ranging from between 10 and 20 in each country).

Across the nine countries, girls were sampled firstly based on their year of birth (2006). Secondly, the household context was considered with girls selected from among the lowest income households in each country context. There is rural/urban variation across the countries, which is reflective of wider urbanisation dynamics: in Brazil the majority of the girls are from urban/peri-urban contexts, while in Benin, Togo, and Uganda the girls are from rural locations.

Ethics: Ethical principles guide our research practices and process from design through to analysis. All research activities are undertaken in line with Plan International's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies. Anyone undertaking the study is required to adhere to strict codes of conduct and additional safeguarding measures are put in place including in the handling of data. Ethical clearance for the

research has been sought and obtained from Plan International Global as well as from national ethics review authorities (where these apply to social research), as part of an ongoing commitment to continually strengthen ethics practices. Principles of confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent have been applied, with caregivers asked for consent on an annual basis and girls asked to provide assent (annually, since 2013).

Limitations of the data: The sample size is relatively small. However, this is offset by the depth of data as well as the length of time – 12 years – over which it has now been collected. Further, the data does not claim to be 'representative' but highlights the generalised experiences of girls across contexts which we know are marked by gender inequality. Its value lies in the nuance and depth of the analysis.

In addition, we acknowledge that not directly engaging boys (i.e. a male cohort) is a limitation in terms of how we explore and understand gendered social norms. However, the study was specifically designed to focus on girls and their experiences. Through our design we seek to understand girls' own perceptions of relations with both other females and males, as well as to take account of broader perspectives, where feasible: in some years we have undertaken wider analysis with communities, looking at schools for example and conducting focus group discussions with older girls (mainly relatives). Drawing analysis from these components also relates to understanding the girls' wider social reference group, which is important for our consideration of norms. It is an ongoing priority to develop approaches that will enable us to explore wider perspectives in a systematic and meaningful way.

Lastly, whilst the value of the study comes from taking account of girls' lives broadly – in terms of a range of dimensions, including education, health, household economy, and relationships – this is simultaneously a limitation. The study's breadth means there are some areas where we do not have sufficient detail to draw conclusions.

Future direction of Real Choices, Real Lives

Given the complex and highly context-specific nature of gender social norms, qualitative data, of the kind which *Real Choices, Real Lives* captures, remains valuable in providing the 'stories' and nuance behind the numbers, building understanding of what cannot be explained by statistics alone.[98]

As we take the study forward, we are in a unique position to track the progress of the girls until they turn 18 and to develop our analysis of *where*, *when*, *how* and – importantly – *why*, or *why not*, 'glitches' in the gender socialisation process translate into 'disruption' in their lives.

In the coming years, we will look to explore further the significant areas of interest which have emerged from this in-depth examination of data from the SEA countries including:

1. The influence of positive/negative relationships with family members on disruption or reproduction of gendered norms; specifically, to identify who the 'disrupters' are – generation, sex, relationship to the girl – as well as where and how they disrupt and why;

2. The obstacles which prevent the transformation of 'glitches' into disruption of norms and whether these obstacles are:
   - ***a.*** *structural, social, or individual*
   - ***b.*** *rooted in context-specific conditions and conceptualisations*
   - ***c.*** *changeable, or would any intervention have to work within their constraints?*

Overview of the Cambodia, Philippines, and Vietnam girls' contexts and data

In the 2018 SEA Cohort there are 46 girls in total: 12 in Cambodia, 14 in the Philippines, and 20 in Vietnam. The table below provides a summary both of the girls' household structure (based on information from 2018), as well as their participation over the study, indicating where they have died, migrated, or left the study, either temporarily or permanently.

Table 3 Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam: Summary of Cohort girls' household structures (in 2018) and participation

Name	Summary of household context (2018)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	Cambodia													
Bopha	Father (farmer, 37), mother (farmer, 31), sister (11), brother (nine); family own their home and keep ten chickens.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Davy	Father (farmer, 51), mother (farmer, 39), three brothers (15, ten, and eight), sister (18, moved away recently to start working).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kannitha	Mother (seller, 52), sister (18), and father (55, soldier) who is only present 'rarely'. *Another sister (15) has left to work away in the past year as a sale labourer.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kanya	*Data not held for 2018.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Leakhena	Father (builder, 49), mother (farmer, 48), brother (25), brother-in-law (25), sisters (23 and 17), niece (nine months).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Lina	Father (farmer, 37), mother (worker, 34), brother (16), sisters (14 and nine), female cousin (17), grandmother (farmer, 62).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mealea	*Data not held for 2018.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mony	Father (farmer, 34), mother (farmer, 31), younger brother (three and a half).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nakry	Father (not working, 47), mother (temporary/ seasonal employment, 42), brothers (seven and two), sisters (13 and six).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Puthea	Grandmother (71), aunt (49), female cousin (28), nieces (four and one), uncle (51), brother-in-law (36), male cousin (22) and nephew (eight). *Father (45), mother (45), brother (26) and sisters (22 and 19) have all moved away for work.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Reaksmey	Father (farmer, 58), mother (raises pigs, 58), younger brother (nine).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

KEY

● Participated ● Temporary absence ● Died ● Migrated ● Withdrew from study ● Data not captured

Name	Summary of household context (2018)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Roumany	Grandmother (61). *Father, mother, and two brothers have all moved away in the past year for work and a sister has moved for study.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sokanha	*Data not held for 2018.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sothany	*Father (construction worker, 34), mother (construction worker, 32), sister (six).*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Thearika	*Grandfather (vice village leader, 66), younger brother (six). Thearika's parents divorced.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Philippines													
Angela	*Data not held for 2018.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Chesa	Father (farmer, 44), mother (not working, 37), sisters (19 and three), brothers (14 and ten).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Christine	Father (farmer, 46), mother (collects and sells worms, 39), brothers (17 and three), grandmother (79).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Darna	Father (motorbike business/providing laundry and water-fetching services and carpentry, age unknown), stepmother (runs a piggery, age unknown), brother (16). Another brother (19) lives away from home to attend college. *Darna's mother left the family home two years previously to work abroad.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Dolores	Father (farmer, 34), mother (farmer, 30), sisters (10 and seven). *Land that the family live on is owned by a local politician.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Jasmine	Father (fisherman, 47), mother (*nipa* maker – thatched palm leaves, 42), half-brother (23), niece (two). Two sisters (17 and 15) live in different provinces to study. *Jasmine normally sleeps at her grandmother's house.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Jocelyn	Father (driver, 44), mother (not working, 43), sister (cashier, 18), brothers (21 (security guard), 14, nine, and five). *Another sister (17) works in another city in sales.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kyla	Father (pastor, 49), mother (pastor, 54), aunt (pastor, 50), brother (bank employee, 24), sisters (20 (sales representative) and 18).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mahalia	Father (farmer, 53), mother (not working, 53), brothers (18 and 16), sister (14).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Maricel	Father (fisherman, 47), mother (not working, 45), brother (14), sisters (16 and ten).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Melanie	Father (gardener/builder, 45), mother (not working, 39), sisters (18, 15, and 13), brother (11).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

KEY

● Participated ● Temporary absence ● Died ● Migrated ● Withdrew from study ● Data not captured

Name	Summary of household context (2018)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Michelle	Father (farmer, 46), mother (not working, 45), brother (20), sisters (17, 11, and seven). *Another sister (22) lives away from the home and is working.*	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nicole	*Data not held for 2018.*	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Reyna	Father (farmer, 55), mother (handicraft maker, 33), sisters (23 (married), 21 (at college)), brother (18). Another three nephews/male cousins live in the household (four, four and two). *Another two sisters (17 and 15) live away with family to study.*	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rosamie	Father (*habal* driver – motorcycle, 50), mother (farmer, 44), grandfather (64), sisters (16 and eight). *Four other siblings live outside the household: sisters (25 and 27) and brothers (21 and 24).*	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rubylyn	Father (farmer, 42), mother (not working, 35), grandfather (farmer, 59), sister (seven), brother (three).	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●
	Vietnam													
Chau	Father (farmer, 34), mother (farmer, 31), sisters (nine and seven), brother (two).	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Hang	Father (animal husbandry, 44), mother (government official for Communist Youth Union, 36), brother (eight).	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Hoa	Father (farmer – rice, pig/chicken breeding, policeman, 43), mother (farmer – rice, pig/chicken breeding, 41), brother (19).	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Huong	Father (commune official, 48), mother (not working, 40), brother (15), paternal grandfather (retired, 80). *Previously outlined that her paternal aunt lived with the household.*	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kieu	Father (farmer and manager of labourers, 35), mother ('sewing worker' (tailor), 34), brother (nine).	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kim	Father (commune official, 44), mother (tailor, 40), brother (16).	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ly	Mother (farmer and wool bundler; single parent, 50).	●	○	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mai	As of 2017, Mai lived with her father (labourer), mother (trader), older brother (17). *Data not held for 2018.*	●	○	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	◉

KEY

● Participated ◐ Temporary absence ● Died ● Migrated ◉ Withdrew from study ○ Data not captured

Name	Summary of household context (2018)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Nguyet	Father (age unknown), twin sister (12), sister (15; no longer studying to support family). *In 2018, Nguyet is staying more frequently with her father's younger brother and his family and it is likely she will move to live with them full-time. Her mother died.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nhi	Father (farmer, builder, 42), mother (farmer, builder, 40), brother (16, studying).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Oanh	Father (farmer, 47), mother (freelancer, 43), paternal grandfather (retired, 82), paternal grandmother (retired, 81), brother (15).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Quynh	Father (farmer, 43), mother (worker, 37), sister (ten). *Another sister (19) moved away to another city to prepare to study abroad. Quynh's grandmother lives next door and her aunts and uncles live nearby.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sen	Father (farmer, 42), mother (farmer, 40), brother (eight), sister (seven). *Another brother (19) is a monk and lives away from home.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tan	Father (farmer, 40), mother (farmer, 50), paternal grandmother (68), sister (11), brother (three).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Thi	Father (freelancer, 37), mother (worker, 34), sister (15), brother (three).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Thom	Father (electrician/plumber, 42), mother (accountant, 37), sister (three).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tien	Maternal grandmother (77), maternal grandfather (81). *Tien's mother (46) works in the city in export-import trade, she sends money home for Tien.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Trinh	Father (farmer, 39), mother (farmer/hired labourer, unknown age), sisters (eight and five), brother (three).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Uyen	Mother (not working, 47), maternal grandfather (retired, age unknown), maternal grandmother (retired, 78). *In 2018, it appears that Uyen lives part of the time with her maternal grandparents and part of the time with her aunt and cousins. Uyen's mother remarried and splits her time between her new husband and Uyen's grandparents. Uyen's biological father does not accept her as his child.*	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Yen	Father (permanent paid building work, 41), mother (farmer, 35), brother (11).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

KEY

● Participated ● Temporary absence ● Died ● Migrated ● Withdrew from study ● Data not captured

ANNEX TWO: CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS: INDICATORS AND POLICY/LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Area	Country					
	Cambodia		The Philippines		Vietnam	
Population (millions)	16		104.9		95.5	
Population aged 15-64 (millions)	10.3		66.6		66.7	
Life expectancy	F	M	F	M	F	M
	71.3	67.1	72.8	65.9	81.0	71.8
Gross national income (GNI) per capita (2011 PPP$)	3,413		9,154		5,859	
HDI score (2017)	0.582		0.699		0.694	
HDI rank (2017)	146		113		116	
HDI (2017)	F	M	F	M	F	M
	0.553	0.605	0.699	0.698	0.696	0.692
Gender Development Index (2017)	0.914		1.000		1.005	
GII score	0.473		0.427		0.304	
GII rank	116		97		67	
Years of schooling (expected)	F	M	F	M	F	M
	11.2	12.2	12.9	12.3	12.9	12.5
Mean years at school	3.8	5.6	9.5	9.2	7.9	8.5
Population with at least some secondary education (% aged 25 and older) (2010-2017)	15.1	21.8	76.6	72.4	66.2	77.7
Children in employment (% of children ages 7-14)[99]	18.6 (2012)	23.6 (2012)	8.3 (2011)	17.5 (2011)	16.6 (2012)	20.9 (2012)
SIGI – Social Institutions & Gender Index (2019)[100]	.300		.530		.250	

Area	Country		
	Cambodia	The Philippines	Vietnam
CEDAW ratification	1992	1981	1982
CRC ratification[101]	1992	1990	1990
Gender equality	1993 Constitution abolishes all forms of discrimination against women.[102]	2009 Magna Carta of Women defines gender discrimination and outlines possible elimination strategies.[103]	2007 Law on Gender Equality defines gender equality, measures to promote it and oversight of violations.[104]
Political participation	Equal citizenship, voting and election rights (Constitution, 1993; Law on Nationality, 1996; Government of Cambodia, 2011). Voluntary quotas for female representation in government combined with gender discrimination limit women's political participation.	Equal citizenship rights except in cases of Filipino women with a foreign husband (Constitution; Administrative Naturalisation Law of 2000). Equal rights in voting (Constitution, 1987) but low political participation of women, with some quotas in place and different rules and expectations for female elected officials.	Equal citizenship, voting and election rights (Civil Code; Law on Vietnamese Nationality, 2008; Law No. 76-77/2015/QH13). National and local quotas for female representation in electoral lists (35%) were introduced in 2015 (Law No. 85/2015/QH13).
Legal age for marriage (females)	18 (Civil Code, 2007). Exceptions made if one party is 16 and has the permission of their parent, guardian or the court.	18 (Family Code, 1987; Magna Carta of Women, Republic Act 9710, 2009). For Muslim Filipinos, it is the 'age of puberty', usually 15 but as young as 12 (Code of Muslim Personal Laws (CMPL) 16).	20 (Law on Marriage and Family, 8.1). Child marriage is criminalised (Penal Code 148-149).
Legal age for marriage (males)	18 (Civil Code, 2007). Exceptions made if one party is 16 and has the permission of their parent, guardian or the court.	18 (Family Code, 1987; Magna Carta of Women, Republic Act 9710, 2009). For Muslim Filipinos, 15 (CMPL 16).	18 (Law on Marriage and Family, 8.1). Child marriage is criminalised (Penal Code 148-149).
Marriage laws	Marriages are only legally recognised if registered with government (Civil Code, 2007; Sub-Degree 103, 2002, Government of Cambodia, 2011). Equal rights to guardianship, residency, marital property and divorce, if marriage is formalised (Civil Code, 2007).	Contracting parties between 18-21 years of age must have consent from parent/guardian and between 21-25, advice from parent/guardian, with father preference (Family Code, 14-15). Polygamy is allowed for men with consent of first wife or wives (Family Code, 162). Customary laws are 'respected' if 'they do not discriminate against women' (Magna Carta of Women, Republic Act 9710). There are no laws on divorce, parties can seek legal separation or annulment (Family Code, 55, 333-334). Muslim Filipinos can divorce but with different rules for men and women (CMPL 34, 45, 47, 52).	Forced marriages, including 'levirate marriages' and traditional kidnapping marriages of the Hmong people, are prohibited and criminalised (Civil Code 5.2; Penal Code 146; Decree No. 126/2014/ND-CP). Equal divorce rights, with provisions for child custody, housing and property (Civil Code 51-52, 55-56, 63, 81). A man may not initiate divorce if his wife is pregnant. Generally, Hmong women do not have divorce as an option.

Area	Country		
	Cambodia	The Philippines	Vietnam
Inheritance rights	Equal rights to inheritance as widows and daughters for land and non-land assets (Civil Code, 2007).	Equal rights to inheritance (Civil Code, Republic Act 386). Disinheritance of surviving spouse is not prohibited by law.	Equal rights to inheritance (Civil Code; Land Law, 2013). Disinheritance prohibited by law and property dispossession is criminalised (Penal Code 133-140).
Abortion	Abortion on demand is legal up to 12 weeks and can be sought after 12 weeks in certain circumstances (Law on Abortion, 1997).	Abortion is illegal with varying penalties depending on the circumstances and the person involved (Republic Act 3815, 256-259). However, abortions have been allowed to save the life of the mother (Penal Code, 11(4)).	Abortion is legal and is performed at different stages of gestation depending on the healthcare facility (Ministry of Health, 2003, 2006).
Legal status on Female genital cutting/ mutilation (FGC/M)	No evidence of FGC/M, therefore no law or policy.	No evidence of FGC/M – although some unofficial reports regarding Muslim ethnic groups – therefore no law or policy.	No evidence of FGC/M, therefore no law or policy.
Violence against women (VAW), and violence against children[105]	No law on VAW, but adopted four-year National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women in 2014. Domestic violence is a criminal offence carrying a maximum punishment of five years' imprisonment (Criminal Code, 2010), although mediation is frequently used. The Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims (2005) has not been adequately implemented or enforced. Rape and sexual violence were addressed in this law.	There are comprehensive laws on violence against women and children for various forms of violence, including domestic violence, stalking, harassment, rape, etc. (Magna Carta of Women, Reform Act 9710, 2009; 2004 Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act). VAW is considered a 'public crime' obligating citizens to report suspected instances, and VAW has criminal penalties ranging from one month to 12 years and large fines. There are further provisions regarding rape and sexual violence (Anti-Rape Law, 1997; Rape Victims Assistance and Protection Act, 1998).	Party to 2004 ASEAN Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women and Children with various legislation covering VAW (Law on Gender Equality, 2006; Law on Domestic Violence Prevention and Control, 2007; Anti-Human Trafficking Law, 2011; Constitution, 2013) – calls for national action plan to address VAW. Rape is criminalised (Penal Code 111-112) and classified as a form of domestic violence – although marital rape is not criminalised – with varying penalties.

Area	Country		
	Cambodia	The Philippines	Vietnam
Corporal punishment[106]	Prohibited in public and private schools. Currently not prohibited in the home, alternative care settings, or in day care. Civil Code states: "The parental power holder may personally discipline the child to the extent necessary" (Article 1045), and the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims (2005) states that traditional discipline of children should not be considered as violence/domestic violence (Article 8).	Currently not prohibited in the home and there is near universal acceptance of corporal punishment in childrearing. However, during a Universal Periodic Review in 2012, the Philippines expressed commitment to introduce bills to outlaw it. It is prohibited in alternative care settings, day care, and public and private schools.	Currently not prohibited in the home, alternative care settings, or in day care. No defence of "reasonable chastisement" (or similar) enshrined in law, but protections from violence and abuse are not interpreted as including corporal punishment. It is unlawful in schools (under Article 75 of the Education Law 2005).
Movement[107]	1993 Constitution guarantees right to freedom of travel and movement.	Citizens enjoy freedom of movement except in conflict zones or areas with martial law.	Protected by law, but limited for migrants, political dissidents, ethnic minorities and repatriated Vietnamese.

ENDNOTES

1. Based on the data collection completed in 2018, there were 119 families actively participating across the study (in one case in Togo, the girl herself had migrated but her family continued to participate). The original sample in 2006 included 146 girls, however, there were a number of deaths in the first year and there have been dropouts. Over the years, some girls and/or their families have been unavailable (for example through migration). Annex One presents tables summarising the data held for the cohort girls in Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.
2. Plan International (2018) *Getting it Right: A Guidance Note for Gender Transformative Programming and Influencing* provides an overview of Plan International's approach to gender transformative change, and our broader recognition that change takes time, is highly context specific, and cannot be achieved by one intervention alone.
3. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Reports,* Table 1: Human Development Index and its components, 2018 Statistical Update. http://hdr.undp.org/en/2018-update
4. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Reports,* Table 5: Gender Inequality Index. Data is for 2017. http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII
5. Plan International UK (2019) *Real Choices, Real Lives. Girls Challenging the Gender Rules: Benin, Togo, and Uganda.* London: Plan International UK. Full report: https://plan-uk.org/file/plan-uk-real-choices-real-lives-report-2019pdf/download?token=1XZdZ07F; and Executive Summary: https://plan-uk.org/file/plan-uk-real-choices-real-lives-report-executive-summary-2019pdf/download?token=l1WO-8m7
6. In Cambodia, by the 2018 data collection round, three girls from the original Cohort were no longer participating (one had withdrawn, and two had migrated); in the Philippines two girls were no longer participating (one had migrated, and one had died); and in Vietnam one girl had withdrawn. The attrition rates in the SEA Cohort are lower overall than for the other two regions.
7. Data collection took place in 2018 for the Philippines and Vietnam and in 2019 for Cambodia – however in this report we refer to 2018 for all three countries to indicate the round of data collection.
8. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/
9. A major study, the Global Early Adolescent Study, looks to explore the transitions from childhood into adolescence and provides valuable evidence related to how gender norms, relationships, and empowerment are constructed and play out. https://www.geastudy.org/
10. Young Lives (2016) *Adolescence, Youth and Gender: The Research Challenges.* Young Lives Briefing Note, October 2016. Oxford: Young Lives. https://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/www.younglives.org.uk/files/YL-ConferenceBriefingNote-Oct16.pdf
11. Basu, S., X. Zuo, C. Lou, R. Acharya, and R. Lundgren (2016) Learning to Be Gendered: Gender Socialisation in Early Adolescence Among Urban Poor in Delhi, India, and Shanghai, China, *Journal of Adolescent Health,* Vol. 61, Issue 4, Supplement, p.S25.
12. John, N. A., K. Stoebenau, S. Ritter, J. Edmeades and N. Balvin (2017) *Gender Socialization during Adolescence in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Conceptualization, Influences and Outcomes.* Innocenti Discussion Paper 2017-01. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.
13. Research has highlighted that the significant cognitive and social development that takes place during adolescence represents an opportunity for effective intervention on concepts previously understood to be set in early childhood. See, for example: Balvin, N. and P. Banati (2017) *The Adolescent Brain: A Second Window of Opportunity: A Compendium*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti.
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15. Reavley, N. J. and S. M. Sawyer (2017) *Improving the Methodological Quality of Research in Adolescent Wellbeing.* Innocenti Research Brief 2017-03. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti. However, it should be noted that in the anthropological literature, adolescence, life cycle events, and transitional states etc. have been addressed in ethnographies across countries and regions.
16. Young Lives (2015), p.1.
17. See reports: Plan International UK (2018) *Real Choices, Real Lives: Girls' Burden of Unpaid Care.* London: Plan International UK. https://plan-uk.org/file/real-choices-real-lives-unpaid-care-reportpdf/download?token=UsHgz7YA; Plan International UK (2017) *Real Choices, Real Lives: Violence in Girls' Daily Lives*. London: Plan International UK. https://plan-uk.org/file/real-choices-real-lives-violence-daily-life-reportpdf/download?token=QR1SQYTh
18. Social norms commonly proscribe behaviours, making observation and measurement of beliefs relating to those behaviours challenging where it relies on use of counterfactual situations: methods used include use of 'proxy' indicators (attitude indicators and degree of agreement/disagreement), capturing changing intentions, and determining what is actually done. The importance of contextual data, and the value of qualitative (ethnographic and social-anthropological) approaches are acknowledged in the wider literature. See, for example, ODI (2015a) *Changing Gender Norms: Monitoring and Evaluating Programmes and Projects.* Research and Practice Note, Knowledge to Action Resource Series 2015. London: Overseas Development Institute; and Cislaghi, B. and L. Heise (2016) *Measuring Gender-related Social Norms,* Learning Report 1. Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-related Harmful Practices of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

19. Vaitla, B., A. Taylor, J. Van Horn, and B. Cislaghi (2017) *Social Norms and Girls' Well-Being: Linking Theory and Practice.* Washington, D.C.: Data2X, p.8.

20. For example, whilst a study undertaken as part of the Transforming the Lives of Adolescent Girls programme reports, "In all four countries, we found striking examples of men and women defying local norms to give their daughters a better future… These individuals were typically trendsetters and 'positive deviants'", the experience of girls in relation to parental interactions and/or their own behaviour are not presented. ODI (2015b) *Social Norms, Gender Norms and Adolescent Girls: A Brief Guide.* Research and Practice Note, Knowledge to Action Resource Series 2015. London: Overseas Development Institute, p.7.

21. This follows the approach taken in the SSA report.

22. ODI (2015b).

23. Werner, J. (2009) *Gender, Household and State in Post-Revolutionary Vietnam.* London: Routledge.

24. Garcia, J. (2004) *Male Homosexuality in the Philippines: A Short History.* International Institute for Asian Studies (Newsletter 35), Autumn 2004; and Patiag, V. (2019) 'In the Philippines They Think About Gender Differently. We Could Too', *The Guardian,* 3 March 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/03/in-the-philippines-they-think-about-gender-differently-we-could-too

25. GADC (2010) *A Qualitative Exploration of Gender Norms, Masculinity, and Domestic Violence.* Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Gender and Development for Cambodia. http://menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/DV_Cambodia_Study_2010.pdf

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27. See, for example, Ayyagari, S. (2017) A Perpetrator Narrative on Domestic Violence: Case Study of Rohingya Masculinities in Refugee Camps, *Journal of Public Policy Research*, Special Issue; and Theidon, K. (2009) Reconstructing Masculinities: The Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Former Combatants in Colombia, *Human Rights Quarterly,* Vol. 31, pp.1-34.

28. We refer throughout to gendered social norms. Definitions are drawn from the works of Bicchieri, C. (2017) *Norms in the Wild: How to Diagnose, Measure and Change Social Norms.* Oxford: Oxford University Press; Mackie, G. and F. Moneti (2014) *What are Social Norms? How are They Measured?* UNICEF, UCSD Center on Global Justice; as well as a synthesis presented in Alexander-Scott, M., E. Bell and J. Holden (2016) *Guidance Note: Shifting Social Norms to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).* London: VAWG Helpdesk.

29. Basu, S. et al. (2016).

30. Butler, J. (1999) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge; Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that Matter.* New York: Routledge; Butler, J. (2009) Imitation and Gender Insubordination. In J. Storey, (ed.) *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Anthology.*

31. Vaitla, B. et al. (2017).

32. ODI (2015b).

33. John, N. A. et al. (2017).

34. Vaitla, B. et al. (2017).

35. *Ibid.,* p10.

36. John, N. A. et al. (2017).

37. ODI (2015c) *How Do Gender Norms Change?* Research and Practice Note, Knowledge to Action Resource Series 2015. London: Overseas Development Institute.

38. For example, see: ODI (2015c).

39. Hollander, J. A. and R. L. Einwohner (2004) Conceptualizing Resistance. *Sociological Forum,* Vol. 19. No. 4, pp. 533-554.

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41. This is in part related to our research methodology (which does not involve observation over a sufficient length of time to determine 'normal' behaviours), as well as the inherent challenges of determining and measuring social norms. See Annex One.

42. 'Beautiful' translated from: *'đẹp'*.

43. London, J. (ed.) (2011) *Education in Vietnam*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p. 2.

44. Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP). Figures from UNESCO Institute of Statistics. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?view=map&year=2013

45. The researchers and her mother refer to her intelligence and to her strength of opinions.

46. Translated from *'ngoan'*.

47. Klimstra, T., W. Hale III, Q. Raaijmakers, S. Branje and W. Meeus (2009) Identity Formation in Adolescence: Change or Stability? *Journal of Youth and Adolescence,* Vol. 39(2), pp.150-162.

48. Vietnam: *'ngoan'*.

49. Philippines: *'mapagkumbaba'*.

50. Philippines: *'masunurin'*, Vietnam: *'vâng lời'*, Cambodia: 'ស្ដាប់បង្គាប់'.

51. See description of the story in endnote 52.

52. All the girls were read a short story describing a girl from a similar background and community who goes out late with male friends, and to locations that are typically not seen as being appropriate for girls. In the story, the girl's family punish her behaviour. The story was followed by a series of questions to each girl exploring her attitudes towards what the girl did, how her family responded, and how she herself would behave in a similar situation.

53. Although the questions were systematically asked across the Cohort, there is, of course, need to exercise caution with analysis based on hypothetical questions and the answers they elicit. In asking the questions, our interest and analysis is largely in exploring perspectives and the potential disjunctures between what girls (or their family members) think is acceptable for themselves vs. what they think would be acceptable when judging others' actions.

54. A game played by the children.

55. Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women aged 15-19). Figures from United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT?locations=VN

56. Age of Consent.net, Legal Ages of Consent by Country. https://www.ageofconsent.net/world

57. Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, Country Report for Cambodia. https://endcorporalpunishment.org/reports-on-every-state-and-territory/cambodia/

58. Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, Country Report for Philippines. https://endcorporalpunishment.org/reports-on-every-state-and-territory/philippines/

59. Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, Country Report for Viet Nam. https://endcorporalpunishment.org/reports-on-every-state-and-territory/viet-nam/

60. Harsh discipline is characterised by parental attempts to control a child using verbal violence (shouting) or physical forms of punishment (pinching or hitting). Bender, H., J. Allen, K. McElhaney, J. Antonishak, C. Moore, H. Kelly and S. Davis (2007) Use of Harsh Physical Discipline and Developmental Outcomes in Adolescence. *Development and Psychopathology*, Vol. 19(01), p.1.

61. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and Plan International (2014) *Are Schools Safe and Gender Equal Spaces? Findings From a Baseline Study of School Related Gender-based Violence in Five Countries in Asia*, ICRW and Plan International, p. 37.

62. Sanapo, M. and Nakamura, Y. (2010) Gender and Physical Punishment: The Filipino Children's Experience, *Child Abuse Review*, published online in Wiley Online Library DOI: 10.1002/car.1148, cited in: Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2019) Country Report for Philippines, p.8. https://endcorporalpunishment.org/reports-on-every-state-and-territory/philippines/

63. General Statistics Office and UNICEF (2015) *Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women: Viet Nam Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014. Final Report*. Hanoi, Viet Nam: General Statistics Office, p. 224.

64. Choong Rai Nho and Seng Tola (2016) *Predictors of Parents' Perception of Physical Punishment of Children in Cambodia*. Seoul: EWHA Womans University, Section 4.2.

65. UNICEF (2014) *Hidden in Plain Sight: A Statistical Analysis of Violence Against Children.* New York: UNICEF, p. 94. http://files.unicef.org/publications/files/Hidden_in_plain_sight_statistical_analysis_EN_3_Sept_2014.pdf

66. Erickson, M. F. and B. Egeland (1987) A Developmental View of the Psychological Consequences of Maltreatment, *School Psychology Review*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1987, pp. 156-168; Gershoff, E. T. (2002) Corporal Punishment by Parents and Associated Child Behaviors and Experiences: A Meta-analytic and Theoretical Review, *Psychological Bulletin,* Vol. 128, No. 4, pp. 539-579; McCord, J. (1997) On Discipline, *Psychological Inquiry,* Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 215-217; Straus, M. A., D. B. Sugarman and J. Giles-Sims (1997) Spanking by Parents and Subsequent Antisocial Behavior of Children, *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine,* Vol. 151, No. 8, pp. 761-767.

67. In the Philippines: a village, suburb, or other demarcated neighbourhood; a small territorial and administrative district forming the most local level of government.

68. UNICEF (2017) *The State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a Digital World.* New York: UNICEF, Table 5, pp.170-171. https://www.unicef.org/sowc2017/

69. 'Child marriage' is any formal marriage or informal union where one or both of the parties are under 18. 'Early marriage' refers to marriage before 18 in contexts where individuals are legally 'adults' and can marry before 18. However, early marriage is also sometimes used to describe marriages in which one or both spouses are 18 or older, but with a compromised ability to grant consent.

70. Figures from Girls Not Brides interactive atlas: https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/atlas/#/cambodia; https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/atlas/#/philippines; https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/atlas/#/vietnam

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72. Girls Not Brides interactive atlas: Cambodia. https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/atlas/#/cambodia

73. Girls Not Brides interactive atlas: Philippines. https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/atlas/#/philippines

74. Girls Not Brides interactive atlas: Vietnam. https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/where-does-it-happen/atlas/#/vietnam

75. World Bank DataBank, Gender Statistics, Age at first marriage, female, https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=283&series=SP.DYN.SMAM.FE

76. World Bank DataBank, Health, Nutrition and Population Statistics, Age at first marriage, male, https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=311&series=SP.DYN.SMAM.MA

77. The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) is a conditional cash transfer programme set up by the Philippine government to eradicate poverty and support education for children aged 0-14.

78. A game the children play.

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82. The Asia Foundation (2016) *Research Brief: A Study of the Alcohol Industry in Cambodia,* p.1, https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Research-Brief-A-Study-of-the-Alcohol-Industry-in-Cambodia.pdf

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91. CIA World Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/

92. 'Equality': Philippines: *"Pantay-Pantay"*; Vietnam: *"công bằng"*; Cambodia: សមភាព

93. World Bank Data, Lower Secondary Completion Rate, Female and Male, as % of Relevant Age Group. Female: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.CMPT.LO.FE.ZS?end=2017&locations=VN-KH-PH&start=2000 and male: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.CMPT.LO.MA.ZS?end=2017&locations=VN-KH-PH&start=2000

94. Females: World Bank Data, Tertiary Enrolment Rate, Female, as % of Relevant Age Group. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR.FE?end=2017&locations=VN-KH&start=2010 Males: UNESCO education statistics by country. http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/ph , http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/vn , http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/kh

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101. Information on UN treaty ratification, including CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women) and CRC (the Convention on the Rights of the Child), was drawn from the UN Treaty Collection website. https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ParticipationStatus.aspx?clang=_en

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103. Information on gender equality law in the Philippines was drawn from the Philippine Commission on Women website. https://www.pcw.gov.ph/law/republic-act-9710

104. Information on gender equality law in Vietnam was drawn from the UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases website. https://www.un.org/press/en/2007/wom1593.doc.htm

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Cover photo: Cycling with her sibling in Cambodia, 2018

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