



# Gender justice and social norms – processes of change for adolescent girls

## Towards a conceptual framework 2

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### Key messages

- No one theoretical perspective on norm maintenance and change fully captures the processes and range of factors that hold gender norms in place or underpin change in particular situations. It is productive to combine insights from analysis of structural processes that facilitate norm change, studies of social convention and conformity, and analysis of agency and resistance.
- Social norms are part of the way in which gendered power inequalities are maintained. Analysis of these power inequalities is thus vital for understanding different groups' capacity to challenge norms.
- Processes of norm change can be rapid and abrupt or incremental and unnoticed, or somewhere in between. Such processes are often complex, messy and non-linear.
- Because gender norms are often held in place by several factors simultaneously, challenging discriminatory norms frequently requires action on more than one factor simultaneously.
- The vast majority of the world's population lives in contexts affected by large-scale structural changes such as globalisation, increasing access to education and the rapid spread of communications technology, which can affect gender norms profoundly. While in the main, these are leading to more egalitarian gender norms, these changes can evoke resistance movements which assert discriminatory gender norms.

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# Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPRC	Chronic Poverty Research Centre
DFID	Department for International Development
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
GBV	Gender-based Violence
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IMAGES	International Men and Gender Equality Study
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
US	United States
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization

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# 1 Introduction

This note proposes an analytical framework for the current phase of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) programme of research on discriminatory social norms affecting adolescent girls. The current phase of this programme(2013-14) involves fieldwork in Ethiopia, Nepal, Uganda and Vietnam that explores change and continuity in norms related to education and early marriage, and a systematic-style review of the impact of communication and media activities on a wider set of discriminatory gender norms affecting adolescent girls.

This phase is moving from an overview of how social institutions and other factors affect a variety of capabilities of adolescent girls towards a sharper focus on how discriminatory gender norms change or persist. It will draw on the literatures on capabilities and gender justice, as integrated by the project in Year 1, on recent analysis of social norms and the processes through which they are held in place or change, on feminist analyses of the processes and structures that maintain gender inequality and on analysis of the structural drivers of change in gender norms and relations.

This conceptual framework paper integrates:

- **An understanding of *what gender norms are, and how they are experienced*.** This draws on recent analysis of social norms and on a broader sociological tradition that examines how social norms function and how they relate to power inequalities. We also draw on recent feminist analysis of the role of social norms in contributing to maintaining gender inequality. This discussion is informed by the fieldwork undertaken in Year 1, which identified the key social norms constraining and facilitating different dimensions of adolescent girls' development.
- **An analysis of the *broader or structural forces (as opposed to more psychological processes) that create conditions in which gender norms and practices either are entrenched or can change in a more gender-egalitarian direction*.** This analysis draws on a multi-disciplinary literature on drivers of change in gender relations and norms, which spans political, economic and anthropological perspectives.
- **An understanding of *the social psychological processes by which gender norms change*.** This draws on recent analysis of social norms, derived largely from the field of social psychology and from game theory. To this we add insights from a growing body of feminist analysis of changing gender norms in low- and middle-income countries. Research in this tradition has helped illuminate the processes by which gender norms change, and, conversely, the reasons why they may remain 'sticky' (i.e. resistant to change), even in a favourable structural context.

These three elements form the building blocks for the conceptual framework for the current phase of the programme, which is focusing on how gender norms change and the processes that lead to these changes. This conceptual framework is intended to foster a greater understanding of the processes by which discriminatory gender norms change or remain 'sticky', and the factors that drive such change or persistence. This, in turn, it is hoped, will help the fieldwork and literature reviews identify the processes and interventions that are most likely to help achieve gender justice for adolescent girls. Further iterations of this conceptual framework are expected, drawing on research findings.

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This note is structured as follows. Section 2 examines three key sets of issues: what social norms are and how they contribute to gender inequality; the structural factors that drive change in gender norms in particular contexts; and the processes by which gender norms change. This section includes a discussion of adolescent girls' agency in challenging discriminatory gender norms, and processes of resistance and backlash against changing gender norms. While a comprehensive survey of relevant literature on all these areas is outside the scope of this paper, it discusses key insights from different bodies of literature and uses them as building blocks to develop a conceptual framework for the current phase of fieldwork and for the review of communication interventions. Section 3 summarises key insights from the discussion in Section 2 and brings them together to form a conceptual framework for examining changing gender norms. This framework is also presented diagrammatically.

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# 2 Understanding social norms and how and why these change

## 2.1 Background

Year 1 of this research programme used a capabilities and entitlements framework to examine the obstacles that adolescent girls in four countries face in fulfilling their full human development potential. Set in the context of a review of the national literature, this resulted in a detailed overview of the different dimensions of deprivation – and, in some cases, rights fulfilment – that girls in the research communities experienced. The framework delineated the following capability domains: educational; economic; physical integrity (including physical health, freedom from violence and sexual and reproductive health); psychosocial wellbeing; managing and benefiting from intra-household relationships; and civic or political participation. While different countries focused on different aspects of these issues, and divided up the capability domains in slightly different ways, all studies sought to illuminate adolescent girls’ perspectives across a broader range of dimensions than are typically studied in current research and policy development (frequently only early marriage, sexual and reproductive health and education are studied; mostly in isolation from one another).

The Year 1 fieldwork concentrated on mapping fulfilment and deprivation in capabilities across capability domains, and on identifying key social norms that facilitate or hinder adolescent girls’ capability development. It examined how far opportunities for capability development have changed across recent generations, and generated some insights into how gender norms had changed or might be changing. It further illuminated some of the main factors that mediate girls’ experiences and that help explain the diversity of capability development in contexts with similar social norms, infrastructure, levels of poverty and access to services. In some of the fieldwork sites, the importance of more individual factors (e.g. individual attitudes – both of girls and of their family members – and household composition) and girls’ peer networks in influencing opportunities for capability development was clear.

In some contexts, the fieldwork recorded perceptions of what had led to changes in some gender norms. For example, in southern Vietnam, education and economic development were seen as factors underpinning changing gender norms and relations. Similarly, in Nepal, education was seen as an important driver of changing gender norms and relations. Insights on drivers of change emerged particularly from interviews with older people (parents or grandparents, or local officials and service providers). However, at this first stage, exploring drivers of change was not the focus of the study.

Having established a detailed picture of how various forces, including discriminatory gender norms, constrain adolescent girls’ capability development, the next phase of fieldwork (year 2) will focus in more depth on the processes and forces that underpin particular norms, and those that may lead to change in these norms. The next section discusses insights from recent analysis of what social norms are, what drives change in norms and the processes through which they change.

## 2.2 What are social norms?

This section outlines findings from recent theoretical analyses and empirical research that have investigated what social norms are, how they are maintained and their role in sustaining unequal gender relations.

Contemporary development discourse increasingly uses ‘social norm’ as a synonym for ‘culture’. However, the concept of norms is defined much more precisely in both social psychological and sociological theory, both of which have a long history of analysis of what social norms are, how they govern behaviour and, more recently, how individuals and social groups shape them. Table 1 outlines some of these different conceptions of social norms; we discuss others further below. These interpretations are not necessarily contradictory; analysis of social norms may thus draw inspiration from several theoretical standpoints simultaneously.

**Table 1: Soundbites on social norms**

Analyst/tradition	Theoretical position	Social norms ...
Comte	Positivism	are the influence of individuals over each other
Marx	Dialectical materialism	are outcomes of property relationships
Durkheim	Positivism	have strong causal status, coercing individual behaviour
Simmel	Anti-positivism	are behaviour patterns agents can conform to or deviate from
Weber	Anti-positivism	are causes of social actions
Parsons	Functionalism	are the regulatory patterns that ensure social order
Giddens	Structuration	are both motivation for and consequence of individual action
Bourdieu	Theory of practice	are part of the ‘habitus’ into which people are socialised and become ‘doxa’ (beyond the limits of what can be challenged)
Developmental psychology	Socialisation theory	are inculcated through socialisation in childhood and adolescence
Elster	Rational choice	work through shame and guilt rather than reward and punishment
Coleman	Individualism	are the result of iterated interactions of individuals
Ullmann-Margalit	Game theory	are Nash equilibria* in coordination games
Bicchieri	Game theory	are situation frames triggering scripts of behaviour
Mackie	Social convention theory	are held in place by rewards and sanctions
Social psychology	Conformity studies	Individuals comply with norms because they wish to fit in with their group

Notes: \* A situation where moving to better outcomes for anyone will require that both (or all) parties change: no one can improve their position unless others change strategy too.

Source: Adapted from Elsenbroich and Gilbert (forthcoming).

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Broadly, the sociological tradition emphasises the role of norms in constituting society and governing social behaviour, whereas social psychological and game theoretical perspectives focus more on why people comply with social norms. Much recent research on social norms has drawn primarily on the latter two traditions. Although an in-depth analysis of different theoretical perspectives on social norms is outside the scope of this paper, we seek to integrate more sociological perspectives into our analysis of social norms, and thus to deepen understanding of what maintains discriminatory gender norms and how they change.

Analysis of social norms in the context of international development has roots in the field of health promotion, with a focus on issues such as norms constraining breastfeeding, adoption of modern sanitation (Bicchieri, 2013), smoking cessation or healthy eating. Much of this analysis and action has its roots in social convention theory (as developed by Mackie (e.g. Mackie and Le Jeune, 2009; Mackie et al., 2012) and philosophical and game theory (particularly as developed by Cristina Bicchieri), and provides important insights at the micro level into what norms are and how they are held in place.

Building on experience of various approaches to shifting social norms on female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and early marriage (Mackie and Le Jeune, 2009), there is now much wider interest in social norms as important factors that maintain unequal gender relations and constrain efforts to promote gender equality (see Ball Cooper and Fletcher, 2012; DFID and Girl Hub, 2012).<sup>1</sup> The field of HIV/AIDS prevention has long engaged with discriminatory gender norms around sexual behaviour (Chege, 2005).<sup>2</sup> In recent years, perhaps the greatest activist and analytical focus on gender and social norms can be seen in the growing movement concerned with gender-based violence (GBV); many of the examples in this paper draw on experiences of attempting to change social norms related to GBV.

In all arenas of gender equality there is an increasing focus on shifting norms of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) that condone and perpetuate unequal gender relations (e.g. Barker, 2000; Barker et al., 2007; WHO, 2009). Social norm research distinguishes between norms and attitudes (see Box 1). Unlike attitudes, which can be held individually, social norms are ‘interdependent’ – that is, they reflect values shared among a particular set of people, or expectations about what the people who matter to one think and how they act (Mackie et al., 2012). This group is usually termed a ‘reference group’, and may constitute only members of a particular geographical community, or be considerably larger, for example being made up of people of the same ethnicity or religion.

### Box 1: Definitions of social norms and related terms

**Attitude:** An individual’s psychological tendency to evaluate something (a person, symbol, belief, object) with some degree of favour or disfavour.

**Behaviour:** What a person actually does.

**Social norm:** A pattern of behaviour motivated by a desire to conform to the shared social expectations of an important reference group (Heise, 2013).

**Reference group:** A social norm is held in place through the reciprocal expectations of people within, and who influence, that group. This can be termed the reference group (Ball Cooper and Fletcher, 2012).

**Descriptive norms:** What is normal practice in a particular community (Ball Cooper and Fletcher, 2012).

**Injunctive norms:** What people in a particular community should do (Ball Cooper and Fletcher, 2012).

**Empirical expectations:** Perceptions of what people actually do and can be expected to do (Mackie et al., 2012, based on the work of Cristina Bicchieri).

**Normative expectations:** Perceptions of what others in the reference group should do and believe others

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1 Analysis of social norms has also been applied to other areas of social policy concern, such as interethnic stereotyping and hatred (Paluck and Ball, 2010), child protection issues (Marcus, 2013) and climate change (Raymond et al., 2013).

2 For example, the World Health Organization (WHO) web page on gender, women and health outlines the ways in which discriminatory gender norms can condone forms of sexual behaviour that increase the risk of HIV transmission: [http://www.who.int/gender/hiv\\_aids/en/](http://www.who.int/gender/hiv_aids/en/), accessed 16 December 2013.

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should do (Mackie et al., 2012, based on the work of Cristina Bicchieri).

**Pluralistic ignorance:** A situation where people have false beliefs about others' beliefs, for example they believe that most other people in their reference group support a practice when in fact they do not (Mercier, 2011).

### **Norms relaxing or bending**

Norms relax when people – both male and female – challenge or cross boundaries of traditional gender roles or conduct, but their actions are not recognised as a legitimate and acceptable norm. 'They are assuming new roles or responsibilities, but are not setting a new standard' (Munoz Boudet et al., 2012: 49)

This is distinct from norms changing, whereby new roles, responsibilities or ideas are accepted as a new standard.

### **Gender roles and ideologies (based on El Bushra and Sahl, 2005)**

**Gender roles** reflect a division of responsibility based on gender. People's empirical expectations or descriptive norms of how others will act are often based on their perception of gender roles.

**Gender ideologies:** A world view of what gender relations should be like. These are often more resistant to change than gender roles. Conservative gender ideologies can co-exist with shifting gender roles.

### **Progressive change in gender norms**

In this paper, progressive gender norm change refers to change towards greater gender equality, following Agarwal (1997).

Recent research emphasises two distinct elements of social norms: beliefs about what is normal practice in a particular group or area (termed 'descriptive norms') and beliefs about what people in a particular community should do (termed 'injunctive norms') (Ball Cooper and Fletcher, 2012; Paluck and Ball, 2010). Although the concept of social norms incorporates descriptions both of what is common or generally accepted practice (empirical expectations, or a descriptive norm) and of commonly shared beliefs (normative expectations or injunctive norms), referring to both beliefs and practices by one term can be confusing. Descriptive norms broadly correspond to gender roles (generally accepted gender-differentiated divisions of responsibility), and injunctive norms to gender ideologies (widely shared conceptions about ideals of masculinity and femininity at different ages in the life cycle).<sup>3</sup> This distinction is important for practice, as it can help us understand why some aspects of gender norms and relations may shift more rapidly than others.

## **2.3 Why and how do social norms influence behaviour?**

Much analysis – in a range of disciplinary traditions – has probed the question of why people comply with social norms, particularly when these go against their individual beliefs and attitudes or their group interests. In this section, we discuss insights from social psychology into how norms influence behaviour and why they are upheld, and from more sociologically informed accounts. The latter take into account the role of economic and political interests, and are often part of broader theories of society. A key point made by Mackie and Le Jeune (2009) is that social norms are often 'over-determined': they are held in place by a number of factors, any of which, alone, can be sufficient for a norm to continue, and which may operate on different levels. Thus, for example, a gender-discriminatory norm may be experienced primarily within the household but be held in place by local custom, perceptions of what is required by religious tradition, stereotyping in the media, certain groups' economic interests or the political interests of particular constituencies.

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<sup>3</sup> This distinction draws on El Bushra and Sahl (2005), who distinguish four elements of gender relations: roles, ideologies, identities and institutions. Of these, roles and identities correspond most closely to aspects of norms. We view norms as partially constitutive of identities, and institutions as arenas where norms are enacted.

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Two important insights flow from this: no one theoretical perspective of norm maintenance and change is likely to fully capture the range of factors that hold gender norms in place or underpin change in particular situations; an eclectic approach is likely to be needed. Second, and as a consequence, challenging discriminatory norms frequently requires action on more than one underpinning factor simultaneously.

### **2.3.1 Insights from social psychology**

#### *Socialisation theory*

Surprisingly, social psychological insights into socialisation processes are little discussed in recent analyses of social norms, which tend to focus more on social conventions and rewards and sanctions (e.g. Mackie et al., 2012; Paluck and Ball, 2010). It is therefore more sociological theories that emphasise the role of childhood gender socialisation as a key factor underpinning gender-discriminatory social norms. For example, Munoz Boudet et al. (2012) point to the role of norms in socialising children and adults to accept gender inequality: ‘Gender norms instil unconscious learned biases about gender differences that make it easier to conform to long-standing norms than to new ones’ (p.16).

However, the processes by means of which gender norms and identities are internalised have been the subject of extensive analysis in social psychology, some of which is summarised in Elsenbroich and Gilbert (forthcoming), as have the processes of internalising new norms (Bandura, 2009; Sood et al., 2009). These insights have been adopted in the field of communication for social change (see et al., 2009a), but more consistent application in the nascent field of gender and social norm change might strengthen practice.

#### *Social convention theory*

Recent literature on social norms (e.g. Mackie and Le Jeune, 2009; UNICEF, 2010) suggests that people comply with norms because they internalise the values embodied in those norms; because they are rewarded for compliance (usually via social or psychological approval); and because they are motivated to avoid sanctions (such as social disapproval or shunning, violence, effective exclusion from a community or economic or legal sanctions).<sup>4</sup> In this account, gender norms are likely to be stickiest when people have most to gain from compliance and most to lose from challenging them (Munoz Boudet et al., 2012). Social convention theory has been applied to FGM/C as a way of understanding why people continue to cut their daughters and emphasises the social sanctions on people who do not cut their daughters: such as social stigmatisation of girls (who may be seen as incomplete adults without circumcision) and their families, and a risk that they will be shunned as potential marriage partners (Mackie and Le Jeune, 2009; Mackie et al., 2012).

Raymond et al. (2013) apply these ideas to the political sphere, and argue that reasons for acceptance of norms frequently evolve from ‘external motivations’, such as avoidance of sanctions or gaining of rewards, towards more ‘internal motivations’ based on personal judgements of a rule’s acceptability. This can take place both at the individual level and among organisations. For example, they argue,

*A government may ratify a human rights treaty as a tactical concession to qualify for trade or other advantages, or prevent informal social punishment. This kind of external motivation for norm adoption, however, can open the door to dynamics resulting in norm internalization later on, when state leaders act in accordance with the norm on its own terms, even in the absence of external incentives (p.7).*

Weldon and Htun (2013) suggest this has happened with ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the development of anti-domestic violence legislation.

#### *Pluralistic ignorance*

Some norms are maintained because people lack information – they assume others support and carry out certain practices when in fact they do not, or they lack knowledge of other ways of acting that might challenge their worldview. This is termed ‘pluralistic ignorance’ (Mackie and Le Jeune, 2009). Johnsdotter (2007) cited in

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<sup>4</sup> This argument may be extended to include religious or spiritual motivation for adopting or complying with certain norms, where the rewards include closeness to God (Huq and Islam Khondaker, 2011), salvation or the prospect of a better lot in the next life, while sanctions may include eternal damnation.

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(UNICEF, 2013) illustrates this with reference to mismatched beliefs among Somali migrants to Sweden. Her research found that women thought men strongly supported infibulation (the most extensive form of FGM/C) when in fact they were strongly opposed to it.

### 2.3.2 Insights from feminist theory: norms, patriarchy and power

Social theory is centrally concerned with analysis of power, with norms forming part of the apparatus by means of which certain groups maintain their power over others. While not all social theorists use the language of norms, their analysis of relations of domination and subordination illuminates the role of norms in maintaining patriarchal power.<sup>5</sup> An overview of different social theorists' analysis of the relationship between power and social norms is outside the scope of this paper. Here, we draw on recent feminist writing on gender norms, which incorporates insights from selected social theorists and may be helpful in better understanding how discriminatory norms affecting adolescent girls are maintained and how they change.

Much feminist analysis views gender norms as a means by which gender-inequitable ideologies, relationships and social institutions are maintained (e.g. Keleher and Franklin, 2008; Munoz Boudet et al., 2012; Sen et al., 2007; Watson, 2012). Thus, for example, Sen et al. (2007) argue:

*Norms are vital determinants of social stratification as they reflect and reproduce relations that empower some groups of people with material resources, authority, and entitlements while marginalizing and subordinating others by normalizing shame, inequality, indifference or invisibility. It is important to note that these norms reflect and reproduce underlying gendered relations of power, and that is fundamentally what makes them difficult to alter or transform (p.28).*

*Gender norms are powerful, pervasive values and attitudes, about gender-based social roles and behaviours that are deeply embedded in social structures. Gender norms manifest at various levels, including within households and families, communities, neighbourhoods, and wider society. They ensure the maintenance of social order, punishing or sanctioning deviance from those norms, interacting to produce outcomes which are frequently inequitable, and dynamics that are often risky for women and girls [...] Norms are perpetuated by social traditions that govern and constrain behaviours of both women and men, and by social institutions that produce laws and codes of conduct that maintain gender inequities (Keleher and Franklin, 2008: 43).*

Implicit in these accounts is the invisibilisation or obfuscation of the operation of gendered power. Socialisation into gender norms, both in childhood and through everyday practice in adolescence and adulthood, serves to naturalise gender inequalities and to put gender ideologies and gendered practices in the realm of 'doxa' (Bourdieu, 1990, cited in Kabeer et al., 2011) ideas and actions that are taken for granted and are beyond questioning.<sup>6</sup> This may be because they relate to religious or moral codes of behaviour (which religious authorities may forcefully uphold) or simply because they are the descriptive norm, into which everyone in a particular community has been socialised, and people adhering to them are unaware of other ways of thinking or acting or ways in which society could be organised. Sticky gender norms permeate and are reinforced through different social institutions, such as households, markets, politics, the media, religious institutions and education systems (Watson, 2012). Indeed, it may, in part, be where norms are reinforced through a wide range of institutional settings that they are accepted as 'doxa'. Conversely, where particular norms are challenged in one institutional setting, this may open up opportunities for change in others. For example, promotion of gender equality norms through (often non-formal) education can lead to changes within households (e.g. Lundgren et al., 2013). Importantly, the permeation of gender norms through multiple social institutions implies that strategies for change may be most effective when they promote norm change in multiple spheres simultaneously.

Hayward, drawing on a Foucauldian conception of power, argues that social norms, as one of the social boundaries defining key practices and institutions, 'produce entrenched differences in the field of what is

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<sup>5</sup> Patriarchal here implies relations of dominance based on both age and gender, with older men having power over younger men and boys, as well as over women.

<sup>6</sup> This is a similar perspective to Lukes's (1974) analysis, in which norms constitute part of 'invisible' power, shaping people's perceptions and desires. See [www.powercube.net](http://www.powercube.net), accessed 23 October 2013.

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possible'<sup>7</sup> – in other words in people's understanding of what they can and cannot do, what can and cannot be changed. Agarwal (1997) highlights the ways in which gender norms are part of a complex system of social stratification in which the power to define norms usually affects socioeconomic inequalities: 'Economic inequalities, while not the only influence, do usually play a critical role in structuring power relations, by giving some people greater authority over definitions and interpretations than others' (pp.32-33).

From this analysis of the power to define norms, Hayward (ibid) argues, it follows that action to counter entrenched social norms needs to be 'directed at capacities to affect the boundaries, rather than at the behaviour of actors' – in other words, to strengthen disadvantaged groups' capacity to negotiate social norms. A Foucauldian-derived perspective emphasises that power relations are exercised through the repetition and reinforcement of norms of behaviour.<sup>8</sup> This helps illuminate the power relations embodied within norms but also the potential precariousness of this power. Where adult male status is contingent on deferential behaviour by younger family members and females (as in societies where male honour rests on female behaviour), and thus on adolescent girls' compliance with norms concerning modest behaviour, it is highly vulnerable to others' non-compliance. This analysis of the precariousness of power both helps illuminate why social norms are constantly re-enforced (e.g. why adolescent girls in some societies are constantly reminded to behave deferentially and according to social standards of decorum) and points to the possibility that social norms may begin to change if adolescent girls refuse to comply with certain norms and are supported in doing so by others.

*Gender norms [...] have not changed greatly partly because they are widely held and practiced in daily life, because they often represent the interests of power holders (Munoz Boudet et al., 2012: 16).*

Building on an analysis of social norms as key factors upholding systems of social stratification, some analysts see social and economic interests as pivotal in understanding the maintenance of discriminatory gender norms (e.g. Munoz Boudet et al., 2012). To paraphrase, males as a group have an interest in gender norms that uphold their dominance over females. This may be related as much to status and social power as to their economic interests; the patterning of social relations means that such interests rarely relate only to gender but also relate to age, class, ethnicity and other axes of social inequality.<sup>9</sup>

Certain groups of women also have an interest (which may be long-term rather than immediate) in upholding gender discriminatory norms. Thus, for example, as Kandiyoti (1988) points out, part of the 'patriarchal bargain' many women make is acceptance of limited decision-making power in young married life in return for the promise of significant influence as one's children grow up, particularly if one has earned the respect of wider kinship networks through producing sons, and gained power over daughters-in-law.

In addition to age- and gender-based interests, other groups may have interests in maintaining the gender *status quo*. In contexts where gender norms allow women to work but emphasise deference to authority, particularly that of men, employers benefit from adolescent girl and young women employees being socialised into submissiveness (Hossain, 2011).

Where a certain group's interests are served by the continuation of a norm, they may uphold it until a viable alternative exists. For example, the (mainly elderly) circumcisers interviewed by Calder (2012) in Uganda argued that they had for some time agreed with the new norm (non-circumcision of girls) government information campaigns were promoting. However, until social pensions were introduced, they had no economic alternative but to continue.

As with the other accounts of social norms discussed here, an interest-based account of social norm maintenance and change can help explain why discriminatory gender norms persist, but is insufficient as a sole explanation. Interests in the gender *status quo* can change over time. Furthermore, individuals can promote changes that do not directly benefit them, or that even directly oppose their gender interests and the norms that defend them. The motivations of men and boys who reject discriminatory gender norms have been under-studied, but include a normative belief in gender equality (Barker, 2000; UNFPA and MenEngage, n.d.), or a view or experience that

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7 <http://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/hayward-de-facing-power/>, accessed 23 October 2013.

8 <http://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/foucault-power-is-everywhere/>, accessed 7 November 2013.

9 These accounts do not tend to discuss socio-biological interests, such as ensuring the children one is bringing up are indeed a man's biological children. This is in notable contrast with earlier literature on patriarchy that emphasised men's drive to control female sexuality to ensure the paternity of their children (see MacKinnon, 1982, cited in Walby, 1990).

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more equal relationships are more satisfying (Barker et al., 2011). Indeed, in five of the six countries where the International Men and Gender Equality Study (IMAGES) took place, 87-90% of men did not see gender equality as a zero sum game<sup>10</sup> (i.e. with gains by women seen as losses by men) (ibid.).<sup>11</sup> Analysis of the interests involved in norm change and maintenance needs to be sensitive to such complexities: they cannot simply be ‘read off’ from individuals’ social and economic position.

### 2.3.3 Situating norms in relation to other influences on gender roles and agency

*Culture and norms influence gender relations but do not determine them (Sen, 1996, cited in Das, 2008).*

Recent research suggests social norms have a greater influence on behaviour than do individual attitudes.<sup>12</sup> However, the hegemony – even of widely accepted norms – is rarely so total that they invoke no resistance. As Bicchieri (2013) notes, choices (and thus behaviour) are influenced by an interplay of social expectations (norms), attitudes (normative personal beliefs) and factual beliefs. People’s attitudes and factual beliefs, and their perceptions of others’ beliefs and expectations, reflect their overall socioeconomic circumstances and political and cultural context, and their individual psychological make-up, both of which influence and reinforce one another. Individuals’ own and family history can have a significant influence on attitudes, and thus on their interpretation of norms. Year 1 fieldwork, for example, found that practices in the previous generation, particularly where these did not conform with social norms, were often important influences on individuals deciding to challenge discriminatory norms or practices. Where an earlier generation had striven to ensure that sons and daughters would attend school, this was replicated by today’s parents, who referred to their parents’ values and actions as part of their inheritance.<sup>13</sup>

As Munoz Boudet et al. (2012) frame it, ‘Social norms of gender are in constant dialogue with women’s agency and may determine women’s capacity to act. As such, they operate as social determinants that interact with an individual’s will in the form of a belief system around women and men’ (p.16).

So, for example, how the father of a 14-year-old girl who has received a marriage proposal for her reacts is likely to be influenced by a range of factors, of which social norms concerning the appropriate age of marriage are likely to be just one. His perception of what others (his wife, his in-laws, the parents of the potential groom, others in the community and his daughter) will expect him to do, and his own attitudes, are likely to be strongly influenced by social norms. His own attitudes may also reflect his childhood socialisation and the views of local religious and political leaders on early marriage. His factual beliefs may include issues such as the suitability of the groom in question, plus wider factual beliefs based on knowledge from a communication campaign about the health risks of early marriage and childbearing, plus his observation of his female relatives’ health, or his observation of the likelihood of criminal penalties for flouting the law. His assessment of his material interests, such as the bridewealth or dowry implications, or of current economic pressures on the household, may also be significant; all will influence his agency and ultimate decision.<sup>14</sup>

While many women accept patriarchal bargains – because they fully accept them, because they cannot conceive of alternatives or because they cannot find a way to realise their preferred course of action – many do exert agency in an attempt to ensure a better future for their daughters. Equally, the importance of men’s agency in complying with or challenging prevailing gender norms is increasingly recognised. We return to a discussion of agency in Section 2.2.2, where we examine the processes by which norms change.

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10 IMAGES took place in major cities in Brazil, Chile, Croatia, India and Mexico and was a nationally representative study that included urban areas in Rwanda. It was only in India that the majority of men felt that men lost out with gender equality (53% of respondents) (Barker et al., 2011).

11 Barker et al (2011) note a contradiction between expressed support for gender equality and actual lived practice, which tends to lag on most indicators.

12 Paluck and Ball (2010) provide various references on this point. Studying adolescent girls in Ethiopia, Fekadu and Kraft (2002) also found that (injunctive) social norms about contraceptive use had a stronger influence on girls’ contraceptive intentions than did their personal attitudes.

13 Nicola Jones, personal communication, September 2013.

14 This is a stylised example: in any particular context, other factors may also be relevant.

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## 2.3 How norms change

In this section, we consider first the structural drivers of change that underpin changes in gender norms (Section 2.3.1). There is a detailed literature on the drivers of change in gender norms, practices and ideologies (outlined in more depth in a forthcoming annotated bibliography (Marcus et al., forthcoming); in this section, we simply summarise key insights. Section 2.3.1 discusses insights into the processes by which norms change. Sections 2.3.3 discusses resistance to norm change and Section 2.3.4 examines which gender norms are most resistant to change and why.

### 2.3.1 Drivers of change in gender norms

A growing body of literature examines the large-scale factors and processes that have led to change in gender relations, norms, attitudes, values and practices. The extent to which these address issues of concern to adolescent girls varies, but the wide range of outcomes of interest means we have found a reasonable body of evidence on the drivers of changes on some issues affecting adolescent girls. This analysis is often embedded within analysis of changes affecting women, as older adolescent girls are – in many societies – considered women, particularly if they are married, or are treated as adults in the labour market if they are undertaking adult roles (i.e. not specifically undertaking tasks reserved for younger children) (Huda and Calder, 2013).

There are two strands within this literature: one is particularly concerned with understanding what has led to observed changes (e.g. why has incidence of child marriage changed in a particular context?); the other focuses on examining the implications for gender relations of particular processes, such as growth of employment in certain economic sectors, or governance changes. The literature on drivers of change in gender norms spans assessment of broad political, economic and social processes and of particular policy changes. It is generally more concerned with changes in gender relations or gendered indicators or wellbeing than changes in norms, although some of the papers reviewed specifically examine changes in attitudes. For example, Kabeer (2012) examines how a confluence of different drivers has led to a reduction in son preference in Bangladesh in an area that she has studied for 30 years. Some papers, such as the 2012 World Development Report (World Bank, 2011), synthesise evidence on the relative importance of different drivers of change in gender relations. The literature examined varies considerably in the extent to which it probes the mechanisms by which different drivers lead to changed gender norms, with some of the more ethnographic accounts exploring processes of change in more detail (e.g. Jackson, 2012; Kabeer, 2012). Discussion of the ways different drivers lead to change in gender roles is most common in relation to economic change, conflict, migration, political mobilisation and greater access to media and communications. There is notably little discussion in the literature examined of the ways education leads to gender norm change, despite its widely recognised role in such change.

#### *Evidence on specific drivers of change*

While the key drivers of change are specific to particular socio-cultural contexts and gender norms, the consensus emerging from the papers reviewed indicates that increasing levels of education and the growth in economic opportunities for young women have played a particularly important role in changing gender relations, and frequently in changing norms. This section presents a summary of the evidence reviewed on drivers of change; this evidence is outlined in more detail in a forthcoming annotated bibliography (Marcus et al., forthcoming).

#### *Economic change*

There is considerable evidence that, where adolescent girls and young women are employed on a large scale, this is often associated with changing perceptions of appropriate male and female roles and of the value of girls' education (Hossain, 2011; Jensen, 2010), with relaxing of norms regarding female independent mobility (where these are constrained) (Kabeer, 2012) and, often, with acceptance of a greater degree of equality in household decision-making (Hossain, 2011; Kabeer, 2012).<sup>15</sup> The majority of this literature discusses the gender implications of processes of economic change in South and South East Asia and focuses principally on the

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<sup>15</sup> We are aware that there is a very large literature on women's (and to a lesser extent girls') economic empowerment related to both increases in earned income and control of assets. Much of this discusses changes in individual indicators of empowerment rather than changing perceptions of appropriate gender roles and practices. In our analysis, we have focused on papers that relate more directly to gender norms than to individual empowerment.

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implications of women's involvement in manufacturing industries. While changes in gender roles do not necessarily lead to shifts in norms, they often do challenge 'descriptive norms' (or people's sense of what women and men usually do), because it becomes apparent that a large number of people are acting in a new way. This can pave the way for changes in gender ideologies and the emergence of new normative expectations (or 'injunctive norms') of how society should be organised, and new empirical expectations (or 'descriptive norms') of acceptable behaviour for men and women, girls and boys of different ages.

Evidence on female ownership of and control over assets indicates that this is often associated with less gender discrimination against adult women and better outcomes for girls.<sup>16</sup> For example, Allendorf (2007) found in Nepal that women's ownership of land was associated with increased voice in household decision-making and reduced malnutrition among both boys and girls. Panda and Agarwal (2005) found in Kerala that house and land ownership was associated with reduced rates of marital violence among married women and girls. Quisumbing (2003), cited in Quisumbing and Kovarik (2012), found a significant relationship between the assets women brought to marriage and their subsequent influence over household decision-making.

Much of this analysis is based on statistical associations, rather than in-depth analysis of the actual processes by means of which increased control of assets affects outcomes. Nor is it clear from this analysis how far increases in asset ownership and control have contributed to changing social norms, or whether the principal effects are on individual bargaining power. Nonetheless, if, for example, greater asset ownership strengthens women's and girls' bargaining position so they will no longer tolerate domestic violence, and sufficient numbers of women leave or threaten to leave abusive marriages because they are now able to, this could lead to a shift in social norms concerning the acceptability of violence against women and girls. The papers examined do not discuss the implications of changes in asset ownership sufficiently to make it possible to draw conclusions about their impacts on social norms.

Economic decline can also lead to changes in gender roles, typically where economic pressures make it essential that women earn an income. This can imply a relaxation of constraints on women's mobility and may, over time, contribute to new norms concerning the acceptability of female economic activity and in some circumstances to a more equal distribution of domestic responsibilities (Munoz Boudet et al., 2012). The fact of women's and girls' increased economic participation should not necessarily be interpreted as empowerment, since it may involve greater work in exploitative, dangerous or stigmatised activities. Indeed, increased female control of assets and involvement in labour markets may contribute to a breakdown in norms concerning men's responsibility to provide for their children, and a 'feminisation of responsibility and obligation', which many women view as far from empowering (Chant, 2008). Nor does greater female economic activity necessarily drive change in gender norms; as with the other drivers of change discussed in this section, the implications of changing gender roles are context-specific. Particularly where the form of work undertaken is stigmatised or unpleasant, or the returns are low, both men and women may see it as a necessary evil until a breadwinner can meet all of a family's costs again.<sup>17</sup> Neither when economic decline threatens men's ability to fulfil breadwinner roles, do norms concerning the desirability of male breadwinners necessarily shift (Seguino, 2007).

### ***Education***

There is a consensus, reflecting both statistical and ethnographic analysis, that education – particularly secondary education – is strongly associated with changes in gender attitudes and practices. Overall, men, women and adolescent girls and boys who have attended secondary education or completed high school (the measures vary by context) are much more likely to reject practices such as FGM/C and to oppose norms that legitimate domestic violence. Educated girls marry later, generally with a smaller age gap between them and their spouse, and have greater control over key decisions about their lives, such as choice of spouse and age of

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<sup>16</sup> In this section we are discussing the role of increased control over assets as a driver of norm change. We are not discussing changes in norms concerning ownership of assets, which we touch on in Section 2.3.4.

<sup>17</sup> Rao (2012) and Kabeer (1998) both make this point in relation to women's economic participation in Bangladesh. Although this is a context where the stigma men face as a result of women working may be higher than in many other cultural contexts, the broader point that changes occurring out of economic necessity do not always lead to sustained change in gender relations is transferable to other contexts.

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marriage (ICRW, 2005; UNFPA and MenEngage, n.d.).<sup>18</sup><sup>19</sup> Indeed, young women and girls interviewed in Das' (2008) study in Bangladesh identified enhanced 'voice' in the family as one of their big gains from education.

The literature reviewed is surprisingly quiet on the mechanisms by means of which education leads to these changes. The relative importance of, for example, direct learning through the curriculum, expansion of social networks and wider friendship groups, creation of new reference groups and exposure to new role models and (for boys) to girls' academic competence may all be important but are little discussed. Nor is it clear how such changes in norms are achieved in contexts that often reinforce traditional gender norms via stereotyped images and curriculum content, or by teachers' and students' own practices (Rao et al., 2012). Exploring how education leads to changes in gender norms would thus be a useful area for fieldwork.

### ***Exposure to new ideas through increased access to media, information and communication technologies and other technologies***

There is growing evidence that increased access to mass media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) is associated with rapid change in gender norms and attitudes in both more and less egalitarian directions. Exposure to alternative discourses, values and modes of social organisation can help shift gender norms from being interpreted as 'doxa' to being understood as one of a range of possible modes of social organisation. Exposure to mass media also increases exposure to opinion leaders and role models, who may (as discussed below) play a pivotal role in catalysing norm change. Thus, for example, Kabeer et al. (2011) highlight the role that watching television has played in increasing exposure to different models of gender relations in Afghanistan. Jensen and Oster (2007) found in India that increased access to cable television was associated with a shift towards more egalitarian gender norms, such as reduced acceptability of domestic violence and increased acceptability of women working outside the home. These are just two examples from a large body of evidence, some of which is highlighted in Page and Marcus (2013) and Marcus et al. (forthcoming).

Analysis of the impacts on gender norms of the spread of ICTs – such as increased internet access, the spread of mobile phones etc. – tends to focus principally on individual empowerment rather than wider social change (e.g. Buskens and Webb, 2009). It also highlights the growth of new channels for sexual harassment and exploitation, such as via text messaging or social networking sites and chatrooms (PLAN International, 2010; UNICEF, 2012). While it is clear that norms and practices concerning access to media and ICTs may be shifting (adolescent girls' and women's access to mobile phones is rapidly catching up with men's and adolescent boys' (GSMA and Cherie Blair Foundation, 2010), it is less clear how increased ICT access is affecting gender norms.

A growing strand of analysis examines how increased media and ICT access has facilitated feminist mobilisation and campaigning, particularly in Latin America (Alvarez, 2009; Friedman, 2005; Garrido and Roman, 2006). This explicit use of ICTs to promote a feminist agenda may have a greater impact on social norms than individual use or access to communications technology.

However, there is also a long history of the media entrenching gender stereotypes. For example, Lowe Morna et al.'s (2010) Gender and Media Progress Study conducted in 14 Southern African countries provides extensive evidence of gender stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes across print media, and finds little improvements since a baseline study conducted six years earlier. Furthermore, the media can also be deployed by interest groups promoting conservative, often inegalitarian gender norms and relations, as observed in many North African countries after Arab Spring revolutions (e.g. ICAN, 2011), and by conservative religious media channels (Horn, n.d.; Kabeer et al., 2011). Even among programmes generally seen as having a progressive impact on gender norms, such as soap operas, the models of families depicted are rarely particularly egalitarian, even if they have led to shifts in attitudes on some aspects of gender relations.<sup>20</sup> This suggests the transformative

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18 These studies generally control for income/wealth, so it is clear that it is not simply factors associated with completing education (such as being better off financially) that are driving change.

19 Kishor and Lekha's (2008) analysis of Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data suggests a more complex picture of the relationship between education and enhanced decision-making power, which appears to differ both by type of decision and by who is making the decision (whether decisions are joint or independent), and to vary across cultural contexts. They find that, 'Education level is most likely to be positively associated with women making decisions alone about their own health care and about purchases for daily needs and with women making decisions jointly about large household purchases and about visits to family or friends' (p.26).

20 They may also embody other inequalities, as La Ferrera et al. (2008) point out, such as the presentation of mainly white upper-middle-class characters in desirable roles.

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potential of soap operas without explicit gender equality emphases may decline over time; studies of the impact of soap operas on gender attitudes stress that changes may be related, in part, to the novelty of television access.

These examples add grist to the common argument (e.g. Hafkin and Huyer, 2006; Ridgeway, 2009) that technological change occurs in a specific social context, and thus access to and use of new technologies reflects these social relations. Discussing the extent to which different technological changes have contributed to changes in gender norms is outside the scope of this paper. Here, we highlight one example where technological change has interacted with a discriminatory gender norm to intensify gender-discriminatory practices. The growing accessibility of prenatal sex determination technology in contexts with strong existing son preference is widely argued to be a key factor underpinning sex ratios at birth that are increasingly skewed towards males (Bhalotra and Cochrane, 2010; Dagar, 2007; Tandon and Sharma, 2006). For example, Michael et al. (2013) show rising sex ratios at birth in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia from the mid-1990s and suggest this is related to imports of sex selection technology following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

### ***Conflict and displacement***

Conflict has often been a trigger for the bending of gender norms, as women and girls often take on ‘male’ economic roles and sometimes more active community management or governance roles (Calder and Bennett, 2004; El Bushra and Sahl, 2005; Petesch, 2012).<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, many men and older boys endure frustration and disempowerment as conflict ‘crushes their roles as leaders, protectors, and providers for their families and communities’ (Petesch, 2012: 1), which can lead to their cleaving to less egalitarian gender ideologies and relations. Women and girls who have been involved in combat (often in guerrilla or resistance movements) and have fulfilled similar roles to those of men can be reluctant to return to traditional scripted roles once the conflict is over. However, the new gender norms that have developed among combatants are not necessarily shared by society as a whole and, in some contexts, conventional gender ideologies have been reinforced as societies emerge from conflict (El Bushra and Sahl, 2005).

As El Bushra and Sahl (2005) argue in relation to the impact of conflict on gender relations in northern Uganda,

*The fact that everyday behaviour has changed does not necessarily mean that attitudes and values have changed. Indeed, the changes in gender roles described by respondents seem to indicate a reinforcement of gender ideologies, rather than fundamental shifts. For both men and women, the ideals of the Acholi cultural code do not seem to have changed as a result of war, but have simply become harder to put into practice (p.23).*

Similarly, displacement (whether associated with conflict, environmental disaster or development) can lead to changing gender roles, which may or may not be retained when or if refugees or displaced people return. Thus, for example, Watson (1996) found that, as Chadian refugees returned to their country after the civil war of the 1970s, many women took on new roles – particularly related to their involvement in new economic activities in exile, which they continued when they returned to Chad – leading to a redefinition of the nature of marital expectations. Women could no longer necessarily expect economic security through submission to men in the marriage contract. At the same time, many women had a new sense of autonomy that had largely been forged under conditions of hardship in exile. However, men had not necessarily undergone similar transformations, leading some women to conclude that their interests were best served outside marriage (Nodjal and Passang, 1992, cited in Watson, 1996).

More broadly, how far such war-time bending of gender norms has led to longer-term change may depend on how widespread female participation in new roles is during war-time or displacement, how far social relations and the economic context have changed as a result of conflict, how politicised gender issues have been during conflict, how far post-conflict political settlements attempt to institute a new ‘gender order’ and how far reconstruction and recovery efforts promote more egalitarian gender relations (Petesch, 2012). Petesch (2012) highlights the time-limited rare window of opportunity in the aftermath of conflict for both accelerating local

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<sup>21</sup> Petesch (2012) reviewed several studies that examined how far conflict had led to increased political participation of women during and after conflict. The extent of women’s war-time political and civic action varied considerably, but a reduction in women’s public roles after the end of hostilities is a common finding.

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development and strengthening women's agency, that arises from both shock to local structures, including gender structures and norms, and from people's determination to rebuild their lives once peace returns.

### ***Social mobilisation and political campaigning***

Social mobilisation and campaigning by feminists have played a critical role in shifting public policy, with impacts on gender relations. Indeed, Weldon and Htun (2013) argue that the critical factor underlying governments' decisions to incorporate internationally derived norms on violence against women into domestic legislation has been the existence of an autonomous women's movement that has advocated for legal change. Engle-Merry (2003), cited in Hallward-Driemeier (2013b), makes a similar argument with respect to the implementation of CEDAW. Banaszak and Weldon (2011) argue that there have been greater opportunities for women's movements to influence formal laws and institutions (see McCammon et al., 2001) where formal rules are patriarchal but informal institutions are more egalitarian.

More of the evidence reviewed discusses the role of activism in changing laws rather than social attitudes and norms. One of the few analyses found of the impact of campaigning and political mobilisation on social attitudes, rather than (or as well as) law and policy, is Katzenstein's (1989) analysis of the women's movement in India. She argues that,

*'by giving prominence to women's experience as victims of violence – of rape, battering, dowry, harassment, murder, and sati – the women's movement has begun to review the way women across a broad spectrum of Indian society see themselves as well as the way women's experiences are understood by those in positions of dominance in society and within the state' (p.70).*

While she does not directly discuss the impact of campaigning and mobilisation on social norms, Alvarez (2009) outlines how feminist non-governmental organisation (NGO) campaigns may influence discourse and thus lead to a change in social norms. She argues that, in Latin America, where many feminist NGOs have invested substantially in producing information and analysis, 'the communicative webs that NGOs help sustain work to disseminate feminist discourses indirectly into a variety of other publics [...] feminist NGOs work to mobilize ideas, not just people (p.178).

Most of the literature on women's involvement in formal politics indicates limited direct change in norms as a result of growing female presence in parliaments and other decision-making bodies (e.g. Htun and Piscopo, 2010; Ward, 2006; Wordsworth, 2007). Women legislators may, however, be able to respond to campaigning for greater gender equality (e.g. there is evidence of women parliamentarians spearheading legal change on domestic violence and rape and equalising the age of majority for girls and boys (Ward, 2006; Wordsworth, 2007), and Hallward-Driemeier et al.'s (2013b) study of 100 countries indicates that, in countries with a higher proportion of women in parliament, there have been greater efforts to close legal gender gaps.

There is also some evidence that women's involvement in decision-making positions at local level in India (the result of a quota policy) has contributed to increased aspirations and educational achievement among adolescent girls, and has also been associated with more positive views of women councillors among men and women. That is, Challenging people's empirical expectations (in Bicchieri's terminology) of men and women councillors' effectiveness may have led to change in people's views of the relationship between gender and competence in public office (Beaman et al., 2012). (See also Section 2.4.2 where this study is discussed further.)

### ***Legal change***

In some cases as a response to changing social norms and to activist pressure, and in some cases as a response to leadership by an elite<sup>22</sup> (Sholkamy, 2011), legal change can also drive changes in gender norms and in wellbeing outcomes for women and girls. Enforcement of gender equality laws can stimulate and reinforce compliance with expected behaviour that underpins and feeds into norm change.<sup>23</sup>

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22 Which may or not be representative or democratically elected but nevertheless promote gender equality – often for geopolitical reasons, such as projecting an image of modernity and responsibility (Sholkamy, 2011) and being in step with international norms and the actions of other countries in the region (Raymond et al., 2013).

23 Thanks to Carol Watson for pointing this out.

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To cite a much-quoted example, India's Hindu Succession Act Amendment of 2005 established equal inheritance rights. Where this has been implemented, it has been associated with increased educational attainment and higher household investment in girls as well as higher age at marriage (Deininger et al., 2010). Equal inheritance rights for women are also associated with higher women's autonomy (Roy, 2008) (both studies cited in Hallward-Driemeier et al., 2013a). Hallward-Driemeier and Gajigo (2013) found in Ethiopia that, in regions that had implemented family law reform, that no longer required women to have their husband's permission to work outside the home and that had raised the age of marriage, women's participation in occupations requiring work outside the home, full-time hours and higher skills had risen more than in other regions. Laws concerning mandatory schooling are also credited with helping shift perceptions concerning the value of girls' education, as in China for example (Ball Cooper and Fletcher, 2012).

Hallward-Driemeier et al.'s (2013a) analysis of data from 100 countries<sup>24</sup> found that expanding women's legal capacity and protecting non-discrimination principles were generally associated with higher levels of girls' school enrolment, with the effect being the strongest in lower-income countries. For example, at the 25th percentile of income, countries that give sons and daughters equal inheritance rights have on average a 6.4 percentage point higher ratio of girls to boys in primary enrolment compared with those that do not. The pattern for secondary enrolment is similar, although not always statistically significant. The authors also found that maternal mortality rates had fallen most in low-income countries that had increased women's legal status across three measures (constitutional equality provisions, property rights and not needing husbands' permission to engage in economic activity). While these studies do not discuss norms directly, the changes associated with these legal reforms may well indicate changing gender norms.

More broadly, a human rights-based approach to development seeks to establish agreed international norms on gender equality (and other issues) via a process of legal change that establishes rights, responsibilities and mechanisms for accountability. These can be a resource for activists advocating for gender equality (as in the CEDAW example discussed above). However, laws that are ratified at national level by elites whose reference group is the international community are often not translated into action, perhaps because they clash with the norms of those charged to implement and respect them, because of corruption within legal systems or because implementation has been under-resourced.<sup>25</sup> Any of these factors could undermine the transformative potential of the law; often more than one is present.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Policies and programmes promoting gender norm change***

A further factor potentially driving changes in gender norms is the range of policies and programmes that many countries have enacted to promote gender equality. There is limited evidence concerning the role of policies and programmes as a major driver of gender norm change. This may reflect weak implementation and the limited reach of many programmes, which mean that many programmes designed to promote gender equality affect a relatively small group. Furthermore, most evaluations are more concerned with changes in behaviour and outcomes than attitudes.

However, there is some evidence that large-scale activities to promote gender equality, such as communication campaigns and subsidies for girls' education, have contributed to norm change (Boyden et al., 2013; Hossain, 2011). In contexts where there are significant numbers of development programmes promoting gender equality, it is likely that these also play a role as drivers of change. Reviewing the impacts of small-scale projects and programmes on gender norms is outside the scope of the literature reviewed for this paper and for the related annotated bibliography, which focuses on large-scale drivers of change.

Nonetheless, there are clear indications that well-designed small-scale programmes and projects can play an important role in shifting norms and behaviour among, and sometimes beyond, their 'target' groups. For example, Barker et al.'s (2007) review of 58 programmes engaging men and boys in sexual and reproductive health found that programmes that included deliberate discussions of gender and masculinity and clear efforts to transform such gender norms seemed to be more effective than programmes that merely acknowledged or

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<sup>24</sup> Over a 50-year period for some variables and a 20-year period for others.

<sup>25</sup> Thanks to Carol Watson for these insights.

<sup>26</sup> Examples include the patchy implementation of anti-child marriage laws in parts of India, which some researchers have related to particular police being in sympathy with people marrying their daughters off at a young age, or susceptibility to bribes (ICRW, 2011), and failure to resource the implementation of gender equality laws in Sierra Leone (Abdallah, 2012).

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mentioned gender norms and roles. Huda and Calder (2013) likewise point to various positive experiences in promoting more egalitarian gender norms through projects and programmes on different scales. Overall, there is a lack of systematic analysis of the extent to which relatively small-scale programmes have been associated with change in gender norms. The review of communication interventions being undertaken as part of ODI's broader programme of work on gender justice for adolescent girls (Page and Marcus, forthcoming) will help redress this lack of analysis of one type of programme.

### ***Demographic change, urbanisation and migration***

A number of other processes might be expected to contribute to changing gender norms. We found surprisingly little discussion of the role of changing norms concerning desired family size in relation to gender norms. The literature found in our searches tends to discuss desired family size as an outcome, rather than exploring its interaction with changing gender norms. That said, some studies make the link between changing norms of family size, changing expectations concerning investing in children's education and changing norms related to girls' education and women's employment (e.g. La Ferrera et al., 2008). Analysis of demographic change and its role in changing gender norms is often related to analysis of trends in son preference. For example, Chung and Das Gupta (2007) and Das Gupta et al. (2009) identify a shift in values underlying a decline in son preference and a normalisation of the sex ratio at birth in South Korea (i.e. that it is close to parity rather than skewed towards males). They relate this normalisation of the sex ratio to changing gender norms and values through the process of urbanisation and 'modernisation'. La Ferrera et al. (2008) also highlight substantial urbanisation in recent decades, in this case in Brazil, as an important factor contributing to changing norms about family size and gender roles.

These studies aside, we found surprisingly little discussion of the role of urbanisation. It is likely that exposure to different values among people of different geographical and cultural origin, and the differences in the ways that some aspects of daily life are organised in urban and rural areas and in access to media and communications, affect gender norms. For example, the usually higher costs of living and wider range of economic opportunities in urban areas may contribute to a relaxation in norms relating to women's and adolescent girls' economic activity, as may greater access to information and new ideas via the media. While some studies find associations between urban residence and less discriminatory gender norms – for example, there is some evidence of less favourable attitudes towards GBV and reduced incidence of FGM/C in urban areas (UNICEF, 2013) – there is limited discussion of the processes by means of which these changes in attitudes and norms arise.

### ***Migration***

Murphy (2008) notes that there has been little systematic study of the effects of migration on social norms. However, although relatively little literature frames the analysis in terms of the effects of migration on gender norms, there is substantial relevant analysis of change in gender attitudes and roles as a result of migration, and some analysis of resistance to progressive norm change among migrant communities.

The extent and direction of the effect of migration on gender norms is likely to be influenced by a number of factors. These include: the motivations for migration, who migrates, with whom and how much migrants are exposed to different cultural practices and values via social networks or the media, and through the implementation of social and economic policies in their destination. Other important factors are likely to be the form of migration, the kinds of work migrants undertake at their destination, the nature and extent of migrants' social networks and the duration of migration.

There is some evidence of the effects of exposure to alternative norms in families that have migrated together. For example, Kabeer et al. (2011) show how exposure among Afghan refugees in Iran to an alternative but still clearly Islamic legal and policy context that accorded women considerably greater rights influenced some women's and men's thinking about issues such as domestic violence and female education, employment and early marriage once they returned to Afghanistan. Johnsdotter's research with Somalis who had migrated to Sweden found that the majority of first-generation migrants did not support FGM/C and had changed their perspectives as a result of exposure to a new cultural context, a finding backed up by studies of migrants from

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communities practising FGM/C to Canada, the UK, Egypt,<sup>27</sup> Israel and the Gulf States (Johnsdotter and Essén, 2005; Johnsdotter et al., 2009).

However, a shift towards more progressive gender norms is not always a consequence of families' exposure to new norms through migration. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994), who studied Mexican immigration to the US, found that when men migrated first and

*[...] resided abroad for years before their wives joined them, the men learned household tasks and were more willing to assist their spouses when the two were reunited in the United States. Conversely, when the family emigrated as a unit, the man generally expected his wife to replicate pre-existing gender practices, and many wives, including those who worked outside the home, acceded to these wishes (cited in Pessar, 2005: 7).*

Migrants may also cleave to conservative gender norms as a means of asserting their identity as members of a particular community, particularly if they feel isolated in their new location. As the International Organization for Migration (IOM) puts it,

*In situations where integration is difficult, it often results in a withdrawal into the community and sometimes stricter application or toughening of cultural practices. In this case, the preservation of ethnic identity is used to mark a distinction from the host society, especially when migrants are resettling in a receiving culture where women have more freedom of choice and expression, including in their sexuality, as compared to their community of origin.<sup>28</sup>*

Thus, for example, Murphy (2008) cites some evidence from China of migrants from rural areas holding more conservative gender attitudes than did long-term urban residents.

The literature on one adult partner migrating provides mixed evidence on migration as a driver of gender norm change. Pessar (2005) points out that how far women experience empowerment when their husband or male partner migrates depends on factors such as whether they are living independently or with their husband's kin and the extent of their control over decision-making, spending, earning and mobility. Furthermore, when, in the context of male migration, women take on roles considered masculine, such as decision-making, independent earning and autonomous mobility, these changes do not necessarily constitute a change in norms, and indeed men may reject these shifts on their return.

For example, Selim and Debnath (2009), cited in Lopez-Ekra et al. (2012), found in Bangladesh that, when men returned from migrant labour, they expected women to abandon the autonomy they had developed during their absence, such as decision-making on spending and independent mobility. Thus, it should not be assumed that changes in gender attitudes and practices persist, particularly if men and boys have not been exposed to and adopted new ideas. In a similar vein, Caritas International cites a study of young women migrants returning to Barbados who faced strong pressure to conform to local (more conservative) gender norms of female respectability.<sup>29</sup> It should also not be assumed that the new norms to which migrants are exposed are necessarily progressive: they may be more inegalitarian than those in migrants' communities of origin. For example, Rao (2012) found that Bangladeshi migrant men returning from the Middle East had often adopted more conservative gender norms as a result of their exposure to interpretations of Islam that more strongly constrained women's mobility and mandated a greater degree of veiling and seclusion than those prevailing in Bangladesh.

There is also an emergent literature on adolescent girls' independent migration, much of which is summarised in a recent Population Council report (Temin et al., 2013). While this focuses more on girls' agency and empowerment and thus discusses its effects mainly at an individual level, there is some analysis of the ways girls' migration may affect gender norms and attitudes. Temin et al. argue that, 'By distancing girls from their families, independent migration can also loosen the grip of restrictive social control that dictates the terms of many girls' lives following puberty. Migration can lead to new social networks and exposure to different ideas and norms' (p.3). They cite studies from Mali, Thailand and China that indicate that both migrant adolescent girls who stayed in urban areas and those who returned to their villages were increasingly willing to challenge

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27 This is a particularly interesting finding given high prevalence rates of FGM/C in Egypt.

28 [http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/projects/documents/fgm\\_infosheet.pdf](http://www.iom.int/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/projects/documents/fgm_infosheet.pdf)

29 <http://www.caritas.org/includes/pdf/backgroundmigration.pdf>

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‘restrictive community customs and social arrangements, particularly those that constrained female voice and choice’ (ibid.: 22).

It is not clear, however, how far girls’ willingness to challenge discriminatory social norms is accepted by others and has resulted in change in their communities.

It is also the case that, in some contexts, the existence of economic opportunities available through migration has led to new social norms regarding female mobility, employment and education. Studies documenting this in Bangladesh have already been discussed (in the section on economic change). More recent studies from other countries confirm this (see Box 2 for an example from Ethiopia). However, these shifts do not simply reflect gender equality gains – rather a reconfiguring of gender norms that in some ways benefits girls and young women, and in other ways does not. In the Ethiopia example in Box 2, there are also emerging concerns about the instrumental treatment of young men.

### **Box 2: Changing gender norms related to marriage in Ethiopia**

Jones et al. (forthcoming, b) document how, in Amhara state, Ethiopia, the emergence of opportunities for young women as domestic workers in the Gulf has led to changing perceptions concerning girls’ independent mobility, the value of education and the role of marriage, among both girls and their parents. While many of the girls interviewed in their study wished to migrate, others were under increasing pressure from their parents to do so to raise family living standards. Young people – boys and girls – were increasingly sceptical of the value of education, given the potential returns to migration.

Most fundamentally, norms concerning marriage were changing. Girls were still getting married in their teens, but not necessarily with the intention of this being a long-term relationship. Instead, marriage was being used instrumentally, in part so parents felt they had carried out the correct life-course rituals before sending their daughters off; in part so that, if daughters were raped en route or by their employer, ‘it would be less painful than if she were a virgin’. Often, these marriages were short-lived, with girls divorcing before they migrated so that their parents, rather than the husband’s family, would receive remittances.

With the recent massive expulsion of Ethiopian domestic workers from the Gulf, gender norms and marriage practices are likely to be in continued flux.

### ***Mediating factors***

The role of the multiple potential drivers of norm change is mediated in any given context by the broader cultural (including religious) context from which social norms governing gendered behaviour derive; the strength with which norms are held in any particular reference group; individual views (which do not necessarily accord with social norms); and socioeconomic factors that facilitate or limit individuals’ and households’ room for manoeuvre.<sup>30</sup> Thus, even in a context where expansion of affordable secondary education, structural change in the economy and new normative and empirical expectations concerning sending daughters to secondary school are in place, an individual household may be unable to comply with norms because of poverty, or because, in the absence of others to undertake care work, the eldest daughter is needed to look after a sick relative.

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<sup>30</sup> Note that, even in a context of structural economic change (such as expansion of women’s employment opportunities) that drives change in gender norms, household-level socioeconomic factors influence individual households’ room for manoeuvre and are thus distinguished as mediating factors.

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## ***Conclusions***

The evidence reviewed above indicates that economic change; exposure to alternative gender norms and practices and opportunities to reflect on and discuss these norms with peers; and political mobilisation and policy action have all played an important role in changing gender norms. In some cases, legal change has catalysed gender norm change; more commonly, legal change appears to follow changing norms.

While there are some examples of a certain process leading to very clear changes in gender norms, more commonly the studies discussed above indicate that processes of norm change often have multiple drivers, potentially working in synergy. The many studies of change in gender norms in Bangladesh provide one of the best bodies of analysis illustrating this point. Large-scale investment in girls' education, rapid expansion of employment opportunities for girls and young women both in the garment industry and in NGOs, a long history of feminist political mobilisation and an extensive NGO development movement that has espoused gender equality are all seen as processes that have contributed to changing norms concerning the appropriateness of primary and secondary education for girls, female employment and son preference (Hossain, 2011; Kabeer, 2012). That change in gender norms is a long-term and by no means smooth or linear process is also apparent from these studies, which also highlight political mobilisation against gender equality (Hossain, 2012) and the stickiness of gender ideologies of female domesticity (Rao, 2012).

Several of the studies examined, including the Year 1 country studies, also identify a more nebulous process of cultural change: slow, incremental shifts in norms that are not necessarily recognised, though they are part of people's everyday experience, and where the drivers are not obvious but where it is clear that values and practices have changed substantially over time (e.g. Das, 2008; Munoz Boudet et al., 2012; Schuler, 2008). It may be that this is more common in norms that were originally less sticky, or where the social costs of norm change are relatively low – this is a matter for empirical investigation.

### **2.3.2 Processes of norm change**

In recent years, concern to eradicate practices such as FGM/C and early marriage, which are widely recognised as being underpinned by discriminatory social norms, has led to a growing interest in the dynamics of how social norms change. This analysis draws primarily on insights from social convention theory (Mackie and Le Jeune, 2009; Paluck and Ball, 2010), game theory and philosophical psychology (Bicchieri, 2013; Mackie et al., 2012) to examine the social-psychological processes whereby people adopt new norms and practices. Drawing insights from this body of analysis, sociological analysis of gender and empirical observation of changing gender norms, Munoz Boudet et al. (2012) further develop understanding of the processes by means of which gender norms change, bend or resist change. In the next section, we discuss insights from these studies and from social movement theory that illuminate the political processes involved in some successful norm change campaigns.

#### ***Critical mass and tipping points***

Recent literature in the game theory–social convention tradition on gender norm change has focused on deliberate attempts to shift 'sticky' norms, such as those concerning the desirability of FGM/C or early marriage. Mackie and Le Jeune (2009) argue that the stickiest norms are those that are most interdependent – they require a critical mass of people to change their behaviour, and for this change to become known before others are willing to change. For example, if marriageability has been dependent on FGM/C, it requires a sufficient number of young men and their parents to commit to marrying non-circumcised brides for girls and their parents to be able to abandon the practice.

In this analysis, the critical mass of early adopters of a norm persuades others that not only is the new norm the 'right' way to behave (an 'injunctive norm'), but also it is what others in the community (reference group) do (a 'descriptive norm'). In other words, it sets up new normative and empirical expectations about how people do and should behave. This literature identifies a 'tipping point' where the new norm is more widespread and accepted than the old one, a new social convention has been established and a practice changes. Some research

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suggests that, when communities or groups decide collectively to change practices, some individuals follow the group even if they are not particularly persuaded about the wisdom of the new practice (Raymond et al., 2013), potentially because they fear that others will disapprove if they do not continue a practice.

Bicchieri (2013) suggests that new empirical expectations of how people in the reference group behave must be in place for new normative expectations of the right way to behave to become effective. In other words, facilitating changes in practices helps change the norm itself, which in turn reinforces the new practice. There is some evidence from Bangladesh that (in addition to provision of free primary schooling) the fact that others are sending their daughters to primary school is, in some communities, a reason to send one's own daughter. In other words, sending daughters to primary school has acquired the status of a 'descriptive norm' or become an 'empirical expectation'. Schuler (2008) cites an 18-year-old girl: 'My father thought it was unnecessary for girls to read and write but in my case he did not object [...] None of my peers were sitting idle at home so I also went to school' (p.191).<sup>31</sup>

In this example, it appears that the girls' father's objections to schooling for girls were trumped by his desire to conform with the reference group of other parents of similar-age girls in the community. It also illustrates that, while the father's overall conception of the proper form of gender relations had not changed, he was willing to accept a change in gender roles in order to maintain his social standing.

Since gender norms reflect deep social structures, it is rarely only social conventions that hold discriminatory norms in place: to recap on Section 2.1, gender norms also reflect moral codes, religious codes and cultural values, and the social and economic interests of specific groups, encapsulated in specific gender ideologies. Where there is more than one set of factors holding a norm in place, change in one area only (e.g. social convention) is likely to be insufficient, and addressing all determining factors may be necessary.

Using the example of FGM/C, Mackie and Le Jeune (2009) argue that these practices are held in place not only by social conventions but also by moral codes, and sometimes by perceptions of religious injunctions. They suggest that effective efforts to promote FGM/C abandonment thus need to engage with the moral codes that underpin the practice, and that promoting the underlying norm of 'doing one's best for one's children' should be emphasised, in conjunction with messaging that emphasises that FGM/C no longer serves a girl's best interests. Where a practice is seen as required by religious tradition, religious leaders have a critical role to play in communicating understandings of religious teachings that do not condone such practices and that being a good follower of a particular religion does not require that practice (ibid.).

### ***The importance of role models***

Both empirical analysis of the processes of norm change in particular contexts and a more theoretical literature identify role models as critical to catalysing norm change processes (Paluck and Ball, 2010; Raymond et al., 2013). Role models may persuade people to adopt new norms – as with celebrities who endorse or condemn particular practices; they also influence norms where less powerful or lower-status people are inclined to imitate them (Raymond et al., 2013). Role models may be community leaders, religious figures or celebrities such as music or sports stars, but they may also be other girls or adults who challenge particular norms, or who have done so in the past and can be seen as living proof that new norms can lead to positive outcomes. Year 1 fieldwork in Ethiopia and Nepal highlighted the importance of older girl role models as an influence on girls' own attitudes and aspirations and, as such, on emerging norms among adolescent girls.

Schuler's (2008) research on changing norms concerning girls' education, women's work and marriage in Bangladesh found that visible role models played an important part in convincing parents that secondary education, delayed marriage and employment outside the home could lead to positive futures for their daughters, and in expanding girls' aspirations. Beaman et al. (2012) echo these findings, through their examination of the impact of local female leaders in India on rural girls' aspirations and parents' perspectives on their daughters' futures. Beaman et al (2012) found that adolescent girls in villages with female leaders in two election cycles were more likely to want to marry after the age of 18, less likely to want to be a housewife or to have their

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<sup>31</sup> The girls in this study also related changing perceptions about girls' education to the new employment opportunities that have emerged for educated women in Bangladesh, such as NGO work, and to changing marriage markets: 'no one would want to marry an illiterate girl so they are sent to school' (p.192).

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occupation determined by their in-laws and more likely to want a job requiring education than those without female leaders or female leaders in one electoral cycle. Parents in villages with female leaders for two electoral cycles were also less likely to believe that in-laws should determine girls' occupations. The gender gap in adolescent educational attainment had been erased and the gender gap in time spent on household chores reduced. Beaman et al. attribute these changes in part to the effect of the women leaders as role models, rather than to improved development and opportunities for girls in villages with women leaders.<sup>32</sup>

The importance of role models is also recognised in 'positive deviance' literature and practice, which aims to catalyse social change through encouraging communities to identify the characteristics of individuals or households who display positive practices. Dura and Singhal (2009) give an example of the use of positive deviance approaches to combat trafficking of girls in Indonesia; this involved a process of reflection to identify which households did not have 'missing girls' and why, and how others could emulate them. This process helped combat the norm that migration or trafficking was inevitable for adolescent girls from poor households.

### ***Girls' and others' agency in challenging gender norms***

In the recent drive to bring concerns about adolescent girls' wellbeing onto the policy agenda, there has been an understandable tendency to emphasise their deprivation and the power relations that sustain this deprivation. Recognising that adolescent girls and young women are constrained in both their natal and their marital households by age and gender hierarchies that limit their voice and decision-making power, girls and young women are often portrayed as 'victims' of discriminatory social norms. This is not surprising, and is often empirically justified: despite processes of change that are leading to increased voice and empowerment among adolescent girls, the adolescent girls literature is replete with both qualitative examples and numerical illustration of the extent to which girls lack control over different domains of their own lives (e.g. Plan International, 2010; Coalition for Adolescent Girls 'Girls Count' publications).<sup>33</sup> Research conducted during the first phase of this programme bears this out (e.g. Bantebya et al., 2013; Ghimirie et al., forthcoming; Jones et al., 2013; Jones et al., forthcoming, a; Tefera and Pereznieto, 2013).

At the same time, it is increasingly recognised that adolescent girls, just like adult women, do not all accept the gender *status quo*. As interest in girls' empowerment has grown, so has understanding of the ways in which girls already influence decisions about their own futures, those of their younger siblings and, in the case of married girls and young women, the areas in which they have decision-making power in relation to their children. Although not all girls experience prevailing gender norms as constraining, and although not all those who do are able to challenge patriarchal patterns of power and authority within households (Shahnaz and Karim, 2008), there are increasing examples of girls directly challenging discriminatory gender norms. These processes have been particularly well documented in relation to early marriage and girls' right to secondary education.

These quotations from Erulkar's (2006) study of young female migrants to Addis Ababa are illustrative of many others in the early marriage literature:

*My parents were trying to marry me, but I didn't want to get married. So I ran away and came here. My mother has said that I am not her daughter any more, but I didn't want to get married. I wanted to study - that's why I came (17-year-old girl, who ran away from planned marriage at age 11) (p.36).*

*When my parents were arranging marriage for me, I asked my sister's advice and she told me not to get married and brought me here (girl who fled from proposed marriage at age 12) (p.369).*

These examples indicate that girls' own agency and action is also playing an important role in the transformation of gender practices. As noted above, education (usually secondary education) appears to play an important role in expanding girls' agency (Das, 2008; Schuler, 2008; World Bank, 2012). Media, school-based or NGO campaigns informing girls of their rights and of the legal age of marriage, and more generally spreading a

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<sup>32</sup> Villages were randomly selected to have reservations for female leaders in village council elections under the provisions of a 1993 law that aimed to boost female political representation at local level. This law led to a dramatic increase in the proportion of elected local leaders who are female – from under 5% in 1992 to over 40% by 2000 (Beaman et al., 2012).

<sup>33</sup> <http://coalitionforadolescentgirls.org/>, accessed 7 November 2013.

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discourse of children's rights, have also played a role in promoting girls' awareness of their potential agency and the fact that they do not, for example, have to accept an unwanted early marriage (Boyden et al., 2012; Gage, 2009).

Much of this analysis is based on the narratives of individual girls and women who have resisted particular norms. Agarwal (1997) suggests that efforts to challenge gender norms may be more transformative if they involve group action. Drawing on examples of women's mobilisation in South Asia, she argues that, 'An individual woman who breaks seclusion norms can easily be penalized by her caste group, say by casting aspersions on her character or shunning her. Such reprisals are less possible if a group of women decide to transgress the rules' (p.49).

Although we have shone a particular spotlight on adolescent girls' agency here, it is not only girls' agency that is influential in challenging discriminatory gender norms; that of adult women, boys and men is also crucial. Returning to the discussions in Sections 2.2 and 2.3.1, as individuals, men and women have challenged norms that constrain girls' lives, and, through organised movements, have campaigned for girls' education and against child marriage, dowry and violence against women and girls.

Increasing attention is being paid to men's agency in promoting gender equality, through anti-GBV campaigns such as White Ribbon and Ring the Bell, and through participatory work challenging 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), that is, perceptions of what it means to be a 'real man' and what this means in terms of relating to women and girls. As noted above, opportunities to reflect on male privilege and gender equality appear important in helping men and boys socialised into accepting gender inequality to adopt alternative ways of relating to girls and women (Greene et al., 2012). However, even without such opportunities, there are examples, both from Year 1 fieldwork (e.g. Bantebya et al., 2013) and from the wider literature (e.g. Barker, 2000; Singhal et al, 2009b) of boys and men challenging gender norms to promote gender equality for adolescent girls.

While further analysis of why some men and boys support gender equality is needed, Barker (2000) found in a study Brazil with boys and young men from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds that boys and young men who conformed to some aspects of prevailing norms of masculinity, such as educational success, having a steady job or cultural or sporting success, were freer to act in non-stereotypical and less discriminatory ways. He also found that having gender-equitable models, and families that had acted to prevent domestic violence, had led to young men adopting more egalitarian gender norms. Drawing on a broader study, which included fieldwork in India and Nigeria as well as Brazil, Barker (2006) argued that most of the more gender-equitable young men interviewed 'had both reflected personally about such issues, but also found their viewpoints supported or reinforced by someone else in their social context' (p.5).

### ***Gender as a performance: changing norms***

Munoz Boudet et al.'s 2012 study of changing gender norms in 20 countries (18 of which were low or middle income) further extends understanding of how norms change. The authors draw on analysis of gender as a 'performance' (as discussed by writers such as Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005 and Ridgeway, 2009) and thus see gender norms as reproduced, modified or abandoned through shifts in everyday action. Less concerned with the social psychological processes of change, and more with the nature of the changes themselves, they distinguish between norms bending or relaxing, and changing.

They argue that norms relax when people – both male and female – challenge or cross boundaries of traditional gender roles or conduct, but their actions are not recognised as a legitimate and acceptable norm. 'They are assuming new roles or responsibilities, but are not setting a new standard' (Munoz Boudet et al., 2012: 51). For example, although their study identified increasing involvement of men in *ad hoc* child care and housework, this was generally seen as 'helping' rather than redefining male and female roles.

Returning to El Bushra and Sahl's (2005) distinction between gender roles, identities and ideologies, Munoz Boudet's et al.'s (2012) analysis suggests that gender roles are often the aspect of gender norms that shifts most readily, as, for example, men start to take on housework and child care, or adolescent girls and young women start contributing significantly to household income. Gender roles are one of the key constitutive features of

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gender identities – and a shift in gender roles is likely to entail a shift in identities to accommodate changed roles.

However, identities do not necessarily change easily, especially if the change involves a loss of status. This may explain the reluctance of men and boys in some contexts to engage in activities stereotyped as ‘women’s or girls’ work’ (Plan International, 2011). It may also explain some men’s resistance to women working outside the home in contexts where male gender identity is bound up with being a breadwinner and providing for the whole family (see Rao, 2012).

Gender ideologies may be the most resistant to change since they are generally part of more extensive worldviews about how societies should be organised, themselves often reflecting particular religious or cultural traditions.<sup>34</sup> This may explain why Munoz Boudet et al. found plenty of evidence of gender norms bending or relaxing as the roles and activities that men, women, boys and girls undertook changed, but much less evidence of evidence of change at the ideological level. Calder (2012) similarly found many examples of a disjuncture between gender ideologies concerning adolescents and actual practice in Rwanda, where norms concerning gender roles and behaviour were relaxing but were still described in idealised, rigid terms.

Furthermore, changing roles can be compatible with unchanged gender ideologies, as, for example, Rao (2012) shows in Bangladesh, where, despite quite widespread practices of male labour migration to the Middle East and predominantly female work in the garment sector, significant departures from the traditional gender script, such as working outside the home and independent mobility of adolescent girls and young women, coexist with a continued ideology of female home-making. Indeed many of the young women in her study considered one of the positive aspects of their husband’s migration to the Middle East to be that their greater household incomes enabled them to give up garment work for the higher-status occupation of home-making. In a similar vein, Johnsdotter and Essén (2005) show that, while support for FGM/C has declined rapidly among Somali immigrants to Sweden, this does not reflect the emergence of less strict norms concerning female sexuality. Indeed, they note that the decline has been accompanied by increased social control of adolescent girls, intensified effort in religious education and increased dialogue with daughters in issues related to sexuality.

By contrast, when norms change, new ideas, roles and practices become accepted as a standard, or as one of a number of valid alternative ways of living and relating to others. As Kabeer et al. (2011:35) frame it, using concepts derived from Bourdieu’s analysis, norms go from ‘doxa’, where only one interpretation of a culture is possible, to becoming ‘discourse’, where ‘competing interpretations have come into view’.

### ***Social movement theory: understanding political mobilisation for norm change***

*Norm diffusion should be thought of as an on-going process involving both imitation and persuasion (Krook and True, 2011, cited in Raymond et al., 2013).*

A significant strand of political science literature discusses how social movements achieve change in both laws and policies and attitudes and norms. Part of this analysis identifies the structural contexts in which social movements are likely to succeed. Drawing on the example of the movement for women’s suffrage in the late 19th and early 20th century US, McCammon et al. (2001) argue that activists were able to tap into a ‘gendered opportunity’ arising from changes in gender relations. In this case, the growing presence of women in public life in education and in different sectors of the economy led to changed attitudes among political decision-makers about the appropriate roles of women in society and their participation in the polity. This in turn increased political decision-makers’ willingness to support suffrage. As Raymond et al. (2013) show, political campaigning for legal change was part of a much more extensive process of building public consensus around women’s right to suffrage. This analysis highlights the importance of sensitivity to context in promoting norm change: activists were able to use the opportunity of changes in gender norms that had already occurred to promote new ideas and to make specific demands.

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<sup>34</sup> Rao (2012) and Hossain (2011) explore these issues in the context of changes in gender roles and norms associated with large-scale female employment in the ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh.

Another strand of analysis, drawing on theories of framing in social movements, focuses on how activists communicate new norms to achieve social and political change. In this section, we discuss insights from Raymond et al. (2013), who have applied analysis of framing theory to efforts to shift gender norms. They argue that policy entrepreneurs and social movements employ two main strategies to shift social norms:

*In the first strategy, policy entrepreneurs and social movements recast an issue in terms of alternative existing norms, to create new options for social and policy change. In the second strategy, policy entrepreneurs and social movements promote entirely new norms through a variety of techniques designed to create social and policy change (p.2).*

Raymond et al. argue that social movements often attempt to reframe norms of justice in order to mobilise citizens for social change. For example, the climate justice movement has attempted to create a new moral norm for citizens and governments of high-emission countries to reduce emissions because of the impact they are having on poor and vulnerable people. Raymond et al see the growing acceptance that violence against women (and girls) constitutes a violation of human rights as an example of social movements successfully developing a new norm. Another example of reframing gender norms is the campaign in contexts of high FGM/C prevalence to promote a social convention celebrating the ‘whole girl’. For example, in Sudan, there has been a sustained communication campaign celebrating uncut girls and women as *saleema* (whole and healthy) rather than the commonly used and derogatory term *qulfa* (Narbeth, 2013).

Raymond et al. draw on Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) to argue that the emergence of new norms, both their creation and dissemination, is fundamentally ideational, rather than simply an outcome of interest-based bargaining. They identify particular human agents called ‘norm entrepreneurs’ who create new norms:

*Inspired by formative personal experiences or other personal commitments, norm entrepreneurs [...] propose new ideas about what to do, creating or constructing issues where none existed before. These norm entrepreneurs then employ organizational platforms to disseminate or diffuse the norms they articulate to a wider group or public (p.21).*

For example, they suggest that the process of forming new norms around violence against women involved two decades of coming together, reframing and common agenda building among activists who had previously been concerned about specific instances of violence against women, such as FGM/C or dowry murders.

**Conclusions: promising conditions for change in gender norms**

Table 2 summarises insights from the previous two sections on when gender norms are most likely to be amenable to change.

**Table 2: Conditions in which gender norms are most likely to change**

More likely to change when	Less likely to change when
No parties have strong economic interests at stake (e.g. stand to lose from change, or to gain from continuation of old norms) or parties have a strong economic interest in changing	There are strong economic interests in continuation of a practice
No one’s power is directly threatened by change	Certain groups perceive their power and status to be directly undermined by change
One key factor underpins a norm	A norm is underpinned by multiple causal factors (‘overdetermined’)

There are no religious injunctions to continue a certain practice	There are religious injunctions in favour of a particular practice
A critical mass of others have already changed their practices	Very few others have changed practice
Role models and opinion leaders (including religious leaders) promote changed norms	Role models and opinion leaders (including religious leaders) promote the <i>status quo</i> or more inegalitarian norms
A changing institutional or political context provides opportunities for changed practices	The institutional or political environment is resistant to change
Norm change communications are paired with opportunities for action	It is unclear to people how they would implement new norm

Source: Based on insights from Mackie and Le Jeune (2009), Paluck and Ball (2010) and Raymond et al. (2013).

### 2.3.3 Resistance to progressive gender norm change

Changing gender norms and relations can evoke both hidden and overt resistance, sometimes involving political mobilisation against gender equality. Resistance to more egalitarian gender norms may be motivated by perceived challenges to an individual's or group's power, status or economic interests, by ideational factors, such as a perception that traditional values or religious traditions are under attack, or by both simultaneously.

One hypothesis suggests that resistance to norm change may be greatest among those with most to lose, or those for whom gendered power norms represent the sole source of power in their lives. This might suggest that men disempowered by other processes of cultural or economic change cling more strongly to discriminatory gender norms and practices.<sup>35</sup> In some contexts, it could also mean that young men, who are often at the bottom of male generational and workplace hierarchies, may be more supportive of traditional and discriminatory gender norms than older men with more sources of social power and respect.<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere, it seems that younger men who have received greater levels of education and are more exposed to new models of gender relations via the media etc. are more supportive of more equal gender relations (UNFPA and MenEngage, n.d.), whereas older men whose social status is dependent on the deference of younger men and women, and on their compliance with accepted social norms and moral codes, are more likely to support traditional, inegalitarian norms.<sup>37</sup>

Equally, economically disempowered women may also cling to such ideologies that give them a clear place in the world and often, as they grow older, power in the domestic sphere. Hossain (2011) suggests that the rapidity of change and the relative increase in economic opportunities for working class women as compared with working class men may be factors in the considerable resistance in public discourse to women's employment in the garment industry in Bangladesh. The rapidity of change may also be associated with resistance to increased female mobility, independent earning and violation of traditional ideologies of female seclusion within the household and the mobilisation of some women as well as men to uphold conservative gender ideologies.

However, backlash against egalitarian gender norms is not reducible to issues of economic interest. It is often couched in terms of respect for traditional culture or religious values. While arguments against aspects of gender equality may draw selectively on religious or cultural traditions, they should not be assumed to be a foil for economic interests. Those arguing against gender equality on religious or cultural grounds may be as sincere in

35 The Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) (2010) highlights reports of an increase in marriage by abduction or rape among young men who could not afford the costs of marriage in Ethiopia.

36 A study in Palestine, for example, found that attitudes to gender equality were generally most liberal among middle-aged people ([http://almashriq.hiof.no/general/300/320/327/fafo/reports/FAFO151/9\\_2.html](http://almashriq.hiof.no/general/300/320/327/fafo/reports/FAFO151/9_2.html), accessed 8 November 2013), although this varied considerably by issue.

37 Carol Watson, personal communication based on fieldwork in Uganda.

their beliefs as people arguing for equality. Indeed, much anti-gender equality rhetoric, if implemented, would directly damage the economic interests of many who espouse it. Whose interests lie behind backlashes against more egalitarian gender norms and practice is a matter for empirical investigation, as the specific configurations are likely to differ by context.

The extent of resistance to norm change may also reflect the rapidity of that change. It may, for example, be the case that very rapid change evokes more resistance than more incremental change. Munoz Boudet et al.'s (2012) study and the Year 1 fieldwork would tend to indicate that this is the case, but this is something that would benefit from further empirical investigation.

### 2.3.4 Which gender norms are most amenable to change? Which are most resistant?

Gender norms affecting adults and adolescents vary considerably between different cultural contexts, and thus there are inherent hazards in attempting a global overview of which norms are most amenable to change and which are the stickiest. Nonetheless, there are clear differences between some domains of adolescent girls' lives and others. At one end of the spectrum, changes in the acceptability and desirability of girls participating in secondary education are widespread<sup>38</sup> (e.g. Bantebya et al., 2013; Das, 2008; Ghimire et al., 2013), and, in contexts where economic opportunities for girls and young women are increasing, adolescent girls' and young women's independent mobility and income-earning are increasingly seen as acceptable or desirable (e.g. Das, 2008; Jensen, 2010).

At the other end of the spectrum, the acceptability of adolescent girls and young women inheriting parental property or registering their own or joint title to land or housing within a marriage seems to have changed very little (Bantebya et al., 2013; Das, 2008). Where girls and young women have asserted their property rights, these have often been much contested by relatives unwilling to relinquish shares they see as rightfully even if not legally theirs (Evans and Day, 2011). Likewise, while there is some evidence of girls having increased voice in household decision-making – often as a result of education (Das, 2008; World Bank, 2012) – this is not automatic. There is also very little evidence of shifting norms concerning adolescent girls' and young women's civic and political participation. This may reflect the exclusion of young people from much civic and political activity as much as gender-based exclusion, given that initiatives to promote women's political representation (though controversial) are fairly widespread (Goetz and Nyamu, 2008; Htun and Piscopo, 2010).

Table 3 summarises evidence from both Year 1 fieldwork and other sources concerning change or stickiness in different gender norms.<sup>39</sup>

**Table 3: Extent of change in different gender norms**

Capability domain	Extent of norm change
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Widespread increased acceptability/desirability of girls' secondary education</li> </ul>
Physical health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In some contexts, sharp reduction in support for FGM/C</li> <li>Continuing moderately high levels of support for violence against women in some circumstances</li> </ul>
Sexual and reproductive health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction in norms favouring early marriage where education and economic opportunities exist but early marriage norms are still sticky elsewhere</li> <li>Some evidence of changing norms concerning menstruation and pollution (Nepal)</li> </ul>

38 There are, of course, exceptions, as found in fieldwork in Amhara region of Ethiopia, where secondary education was increasingly not seen as a good investment when compared with migration to the Middle East (Tefera and Pereznieto, forthcoming).

39 It should be noted that some regions of the world, such as Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States are under-represented, as no fieldwork was undertaken in these regions. They are, however, represented in some other analyses of trends in gender norms, such as Munoz Boudet et al. (2012)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In some contexts, declining emphasis on chastity and less censoring of pre-marital sex; in others virginity until marriage remains of utmost importance</li> </ul>
Emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some evidence of declining son preference (e.g. where old-age support from daughters is acceptable)</li> <li>• Some evidence of increased acceptability of girls' independent mobility</li> <li>• Limited evidence of changing distribution of domestic workloads</li> </ul>
Economic participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In some contexts, growing acceptability of girls inheriting property from their parents (Das, 2008)</li> <li>• Very little change concerning women's and girls' ownership of assets, particularly for married girls (Das, 2008)</li> <li>• Growing acceptability of older girls' and young married women's employment outside the home, and independent earning (widespread)</li> </ul>
Voice, civic and political engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some evidence of increased voice in household decision-making, particularly among educated girls (Das, 2008; World Bank, 2012)</li> <li>• Projects engaging girls in civic activities often have local effects on girls' activism in public roles</li> <li>• Very little evidence of changes in norms concerning older girls and young women's political participation – reflects both age- and gender-based processes of exclusion</li> </ul>

A number of explanations could be advanced as to why some gender norms appear to be much more amenable to change than others. It could, for example, be the case that norms have changed fastest in areas where people perceive a likely benefit to themselves, as with young women's entry into paid employment and with girls' education. It may also be the case that norms have changed more rapidly in areas that have been the focus of social and political mobilisation. Again, girls' education is an example.

It could also be the case that norms have changed faster in areas where people who benefit from the current gender order have less to lose. Conversely, norms may have changed more slowly in areas where there are economic interests at stake. This could, for example, explain the slow pace of change in norms concerning asset ownership.

Changes that might lead to more fundamental reconfiguring of power may change more slowly or evoke more resistance. Thus, for example, marriage practices may change slowly where parental and particularly patriarchal status is at stake. By contrast, where marriages are seen as a contract principally between two individuals, rather than their families, lineages or clans, norms may be likely to change more quickly.<sup>40</sup>

This brief discussion illustrates that not much is known about why certain norms change relatively rapidly and others do not. How far particular changes evoke resistance and how fast or slowly they change is likely to be context-specific, and to require empirical investigation and further analysis. Further investigation of the types of norm change that evoke most resistance and the circumstances in which they do so would thus help illuminate potential blockages to gender norm change.

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<sup>40</sup> This is based on observations by Grace Bantebya in September 2013.

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# 3 Summary and implications for conceptual framework

This section brings together key points raised in the preceding analysis and use them to construct an analytical framework for the next phase of the study. Section 2 outlined insights from a range of different analytical traditions and perspectives – including social psychological studies of conformity and why people comply with social conventions; feminist studies of power, norm change and resistance; and analysis of structural drivers of change in gender norms. These all form important building blocks for understanding changes in or maintenance of discriminatory gender norms affecting adolescents, and the framework we develop integrates these different elements. We summarise these key insights and building blocks of our conceptual framework here.

**1. Multiple factors underpin change or stasis.** A key point raised by Mackie and Le Jeune (2009) is that social norms are often held in place by a number of factors simultaneously; likewise, change may be driven by multiple factors occurring at the same time, which may be operating on different levels. Thus, for example, structural forces of change or stasis set the context in which psychological processes promoting or undermining change take place. Analytically and practically, it is vital to disentangle the different processes that are taking place simultaneously.

**2. The motivation to fit in with the social groups that are significant to people is extremely powerful.** Social convention studies highlight this driving force, which leads many people to conform to social norms, even where they privately disagree with them. Social convention studies also highlight the strong social sanctions that can be applied to those who challenge norms – including ostracism and violence. They also highlight the social approval and sense of full inclusion in a community that conforming to social norms can bring, and thus help generate an understanding of the powerful incentives people have to conform to social norms, even where they undermine individuals' or groups' strategic interests.

**3. Social norms are part of the way in which power inequalities are maintained.** Discriminatory gender norms affecting adolescents are key forces maintaining patriarchal power relationships that subordinate women, girls and younger men and boys. Feminist power analysis is thus a vital element of a toolkit for understanding and challenging discriminatory gender norms:

- **Feminist power analysis, drawing on wider social theory, such as Bourdieu and Lukes, shows how many gender norms that embody power inequalities are 'naturalised'** and thus put outside the realm of ideas and practices that can be discussed, debated or challenged. Thus, conforming or not conforming to particular norms is often outside the realm of conscious choice, as people perceive certain ways of organising society as 'natural' or 'god-given'.
- **Analysis of power inequalities is vital for understanding different groups' capacity to challenge norms.** Often, adolescent girls are at the bottom of 'power hierarchies' and have very limited say over decisions affecting them. Equally, women are often constrained by 'patriarchal bargains' that involve trading off autonomy for security, particularly in earlier phases of the life cycle, and perceive their daughters' best interests to be met by conforming to norms that secure their marriageability and hoped-for economic security. Men's capacity to challenge gender norms they disagree with is also constrained by their social positioning. In particular, poorer men with low social status and dependence on the approval of patrons or peer social networks may have less room for manoeuvre than better-off men and those with more autonomy in their social relationships.

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**4. The vast majority of the world's population lives in contexts affected by large-scale structural changes that have the capacity to affect gender norms profoundly.** These structural changes set the backdrop against which processes of norm change or maintenance take place. Key structural changes include shifting patterns of economic activity (globalisation), producing increased economic opportunities in some places and reduced opportunities in others, and exposure to new ideas via the rapid spread of communication technologies and large-scale migration, both between and within countries, and through processes of urbanisation. Related to these changes in ideas are policy and legal changes that often respond to changing norms, campaigning and mobilisation for gender equality, and that can further catalyse norm change but may also reinforce discriminatory gender norms. Conflict and displacement often force changes in gender roles, and the aftermath of disruption and displacement can provide an opportunity for institutionalising more gender-egalitarian norms and practices, although there can also be strong pressures to the contrary.

The politicisation of gender ideologies can mean that forces promoting pro-equality changes may be strongly contested, and rapid and widespread structural change can be associated with social and political movements promoting conservative conceptions of gender as well as change.

**5. Norms need to be understood in relation to other influences on agency and action, as, even where there are strong incentives to conform to norms, there are often individuals who do not.** Key other influences include individual attitudes, which reflect knowledge, individuals' immediate familial and peer networks and education, which is in many contexts strongly associated with changing (and less discriminatory) gender norms and practices.<sup>41</sup> They are also influenced by role models who provide living illustrations of the possibility of doing things differently. These factors are in constant tension with norms and affect individuals' agency; adolescent girls' own agency; and that of key others who influence their lives – mothers, fathers, grandparents, brothers, sisters, peers, teachers and community leaders – and, if they are married, husbands and in-laws.

**6. Agency plays an important role in challenging norms.** This is the case at both individual and collective levels. For example, a few girls' or families' decisions to challenge social norms – for example by studying after puberty or resisting early marriage – can start to shift norms concerning appropriate behaviour for adolescent girls. Collective mobilisation by women, girls and often also men oriented towards gender equality has played a critical role in shifting gender norms and public policy on key gender issues. Understanding agency is also vital for understanding opposition to gender equality and backlash against changing gender norms.

**7. Agency – and conformity with norms – is profoundly affected by socioeconomic circumstances.** Poverty can make conforming to progressive gender norms impossible – and may thus be a key impediment to changes in practices. In some contexts, economic pressures make conformity to accepted gender norms impossible. However, gender roles that change as a result of economic pressure do not necessarily lead to changed gender ideologies – and discriminatory norms are sometimes reasserted when economic conditions improve.

**8. Processes of norm change can be rapid and abrupt or incremental and unnoticed, or somewhere in between.** They are often complex, messy and not linear. Practices can change without norms necessarily changing significantly, and with fundamental social values or gender ideologies remaining intact. In other contexts, changed values lead to changes in attitudes, in perceptions of what is normal (practised by others), in what is socially valued and thus in actions. Alternatively, changed practices can lead to a change in norm that is recursive – the adoption of new norms then spurs greater change in practice.

Figure 1 summarises these building blocks of the conceptual framework for the next phase of the project diagrammatically. It is intended to illustrate some of the main forces that contribute to change in gender norms, and those that contribute to the maintenance of discriminatory gender norms. Given the complexity of norm change processes, this diagram attempts to illustrate only some of the main relationships. Real life is messier!

Some forces – such as education or the media – can both promote change or help maintain discriminatory norms, and they thus appear in both clusters of forces. The blue and orange spheres respectively represent forces of positive change and forces maintaining discriminatory gender norms. The interests of powerful groups appear

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<sup>41</sup> Some Middle Eastern countries are exceptions, with high levels of female participation in secondary and tertiary education, but continued low involvement of women in political and economic life (WEF, 2013), implying that discriminatory gender norms continue to be powerful influences on women's opportunities.

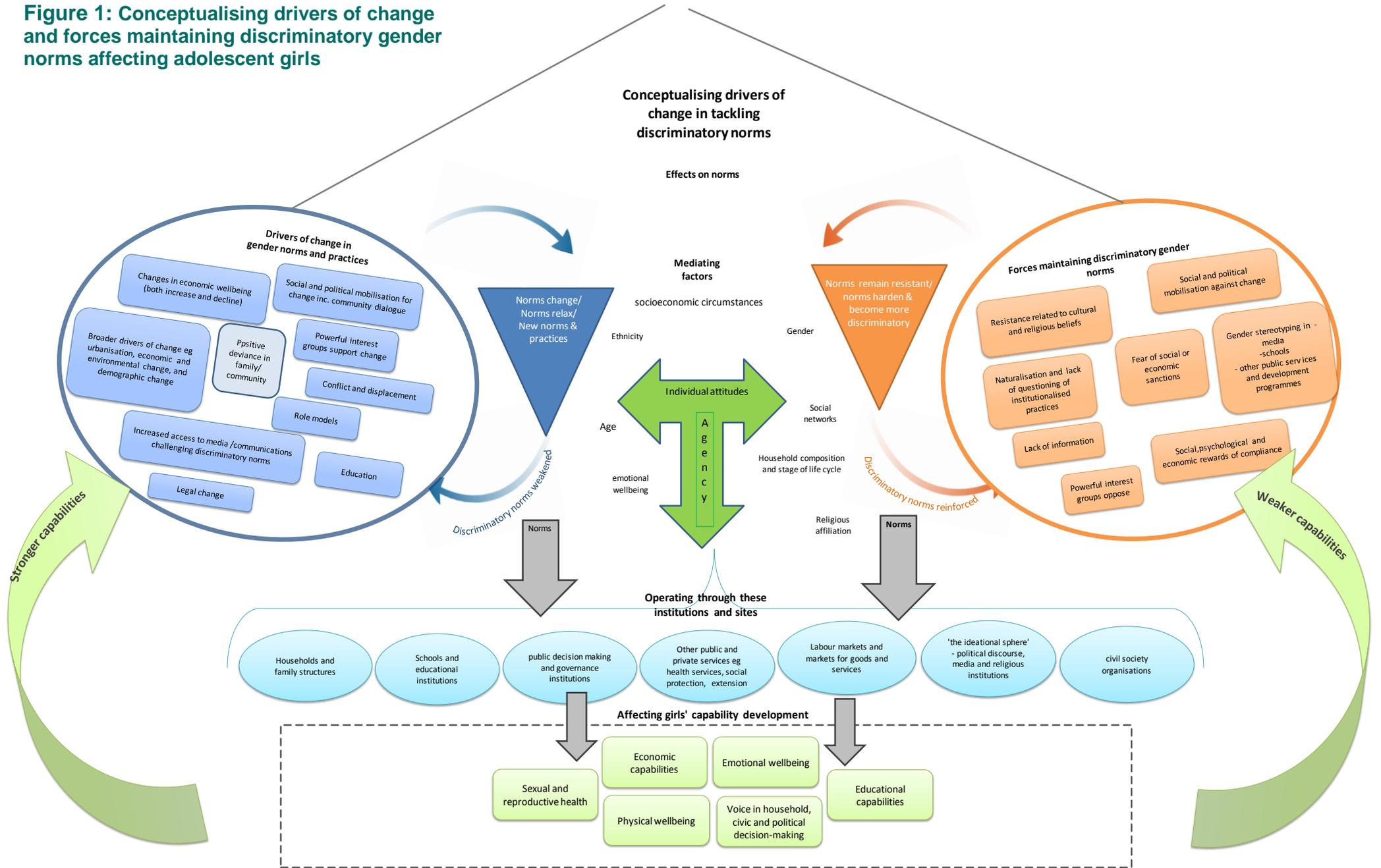
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in both spheres – as drivers of positive change and forces resisting norm change. The blue and orange spheres illustrate both structural drivers of change in gender norms and more contingent or social psychological factors that may promote or impede change in gender norms. As we have stressed throughout this paper, neither forces promoting change nor those maintaining norms are determinant – they are in constant interaction with each other.

Norms – and processes of change or stasis – affect agency and what individuals actually do. Agency is also affected by a myriad of factors, which mediate the effects of gender norms on behaviour; selected influences are shown in grey.

Both norms and adolescent girls' agency operate through a range of institutional sites, illustrated by the turquoise ovals, and affect the ultimate outcomes – adolescent girls' capabilities (indicated in green). Feedback arrows indicate that these are not one-way processes – girls' capabilities affect their agency and thus their capacity to challenge discriminatory norms.

**Figure 1: Conceptualising drivers of change and forces maintaining discriminatory gender norms affecting adolescent girls**



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# Annexes

## Annex 1: Knowledge gaps emerging from the literature reviewed

The review of literature conducted for the development of this conceptual framework and the related annotated bibliography on drivers of change in gender norms highlights a number of knowledge gaps. These are grouped into two main areas of enquiry: broader analysis of the dynamics of norm change and maintenance; and thematic knowledge gaps. This assessment of knowledge gaps is intended as a contribution to the broader community of researchers and activists interested in gender norm change. It is not meant to prescribe a research agenda for the next phase of fieldwork.

### *Understanding stickiness and change in gender norms*

*How do change processes and resistance to change differ by norm?*

Which gender norms are changing most rapidly and why? How far do norm changes appear to be driving or reflecting deep-seated changes in gender relations? How far are norm changes accommodated within continuing discriminatory gender ideologies concerning adolescent girls and young women?

Which gender norms are stickiest in particular contexts and why? How does stickiness relate to the distribution of power?

Are certain gender norms more fundamental than others to maintaining the gender order? Are these the norms that are stickiest (most resistant to change)?

### *Dynamics of norm change processes*

How should the relationship between change in gender roles and changes in gender ideologies be understood? Do gender norms change where sufficient numbers of individuals have adopted a practice? Or must a sufficient number of people's worldviews and perceptions about how people of a certain community (ethnic, geographical, religious) should live shift before widespread changes in practices affecting adolescent girls can occur?

What role have charismatic individuals or role models played in leading norm change? How have they influenced others? More broadly, who is endorsing change in specific gender norms and why? How does their social position affect their influence? What implications does this have for understanding of how social norms change?

What factors inhibit changes in gender norms? How important are fear of economic, social or legal sanctions, or violence, as compared with other factors, such as lack of information or religious beliefs? Who is opposed to norm change and why? Are their interests threatened by gender norm change? If so, how?

How do processes of social exclusion relate to processes of norm maintenance or change? For example, is there a clear relationship between poverty and the stickiness or relative ease of norm change? Is there a relationship between being part of a marginalised group (e.g. minority ethnic group, marginalised religious group) and norm stickiness?

### *Agency and mobilisation for change*

What role have adolescent girls played in challenging discriminatory gender norms and practices? What tactics have they used? What has constrained their agency? Have these efforts been successful in changing discriminatory social norms (even in a single area) rather than simply achieving change for the individuals

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concerned? What has underpinned success in altering perceptions of acceptable or good gender norms and practices?

How have other constituencies (e.g. adult women, boys and men) mobilised for change in discriminatory gender norms? If so, who and what have motivated this mobilisation? How important are the identities of those who are mobilising for change? (For example, have changes in gender norms been more widespread or long-lasting when a wide constituency of individuals, including men, have mobilised for change?)

In what circumstances/contexts or in relation to which norms is resistance to gender norm change strongest? How is resistance to gender norm change related to the scale or rapidity of change? How is resistance related to the redistribution of power implied by norm and practice change? How are arguments against gender equality (or gender norm change) phrased? Are there any lessons from this as to how pro-equality arguments should be framed in particular contexts?

### *Significance of different drivers of change*

In our analysis of drivers of change, we have found relatively few empirically grounded accounts that assess the relative significance of different drivers of change. Key knowledge gaps include:

- Which drivers of change have had the most significant effects on gender-discriminatory norms in particular contexts?
- Which structural forces are powerful enough to drive change on their own? Which forces appear to drive change principally in combination with others?

### *Sustaining progressive changes in gender norms*

Most evaluations of programmes to change gender norms take place immediately after the end of the activity or with a relatively short time lag. While many analyses of drivers of change in gender norms do point to longer-term changes, it is also clear that some changes are temporary accommodations to circumstances, which have not led to fundamental transformation of gender ideologies. Others are vulnerable to life cycle pressures (e.g. where egalitarian-minded young men and women slip into more conservative patterns with the responsibilities of parenthood and sometimes under the pressure of the older generation). Still other changes are at risk of reversal by organised processes of backlash.

A key question is: how can changes in gender norms be sustained over time (a generation or longer)? What factors facilitate changes becoming permanent and forming new norms? What types of norm change are more vulnerable to reversal?

### *Thematic knowledge gaps*

The following thematic gaps concerning different drivers of change emerged from the literature reviewed. One other key gap – a more detailed understanding of how different types of communications contribute to sustained gender norm change – will be covered in the review of communication interventions.

#### *Education*

Although education is widely recognised to be a key driver of change, the processes by means of which it leads to change in gender norms are not well understood. The following questions are intended to serve as a basis for inquiry to shed light on how education leads to gender norm change and its limitations as a strategy for norm change:

- How is increased enrolment of girls and boys in secondary education affecting gender norms? Which norms are being affected?
- What aspects of school attendance do adolescents and young people (in school and recent school leavers) feel are/were most important in changing perceptions of gender norms and roles (e.g. new ideas, new social network, role models etc.)?

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- How far did these changes persist into their adult lives (e.g. did relatively egalitarian attitudes dissipate under the strength of cultural scripts for married men and women)?
  - How do gender-discriminatory practices within classrooms, curricula and broader school management reinforce discriminatory norms? In what contexts do the gender-transformative aspects of education outweigh these more conservative forces?

### *Migration*

Migration also emerged from the literature review as an important driver of change in gender norms, but one with potentially contradictory implications. Further empirical investigation would be helpful to gain a greater understanding of the circumstances under which migration promotes sustained progressive change in gender norms. Specifically,

- What types of experiences during migration affect individuals' perceptions of gender norms (e.g. what are the relative roles of bending gender norms to overcome practical difficulties, exposure to different cultures, exposure to a wider range of communications, increased income-earning opportunities/impooverishment etc.)?
- How does the impact of migration on gender norms differ among different social groups by age and gender? For example, is it different for children, young migrant men/adolescent boys and young migrant women/adolescent girls and middle-aged or older people? Does marital status or family life cycle stage make a difference?
- Are migrants as a group more likely to be open to changing gender norms than their peers who have stayed behind (e.g. are migrants a self-selected group who are more disposed to change than their peers)?
- Under what circumstances do migrants cleave more strongly to older gender ideologies?
- Under what circumstances are shifts in gender norms sustained when (if) migrants return home? Under what circumstances do migrants who adopted new gender norms while away from home revert to more traditional gender norms?



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