

# Gender equality and women and girls' empowerment



# The issue

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Progress towards gender equality is being made across the world, but it is hugely variable, hard to advance at pace and in places is in retreat. Gender inequality continues to harm millions worldwide; discriminatory gendered norms prevail and resistance to progress is common. Women and girls still lack control over economic, social and political resources. Stark disparities between women remain, influenced by intersecting social identities such as gender, age, disability, ethnicity and class.

- While more women are in work, this has not been matched by better employment conditions or equal pay.
- Unpaid care and domestic work restrict women's economic and personal well-being.
- Violence against women and girls is alarmingly prevalent.
- Disparities in educational attainment persist.
- Maternal mortality rates in some regions are unacceptably high.
- Women's presence in decision-making – from formal political participation to decision-making roles in the private sector, public bureaucracies and the home – is limited.

# Our approach

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We provide independent research, analysis and advice to inform policies and practices that advance gender justice across ODI's six strategic priority areas.

Our interdisciplinary approach allows us to engage with the complexities of change and offer politically smart and contextually relevant analysis and advice.

We work with influential partners to raise the profile of gender issues at key international moments and use our research findings to inform high-level political processes.

We work with research partners and communities on long-standing issues, as well as engaging in emerging policy agendas to encourage the adoption of a gender lens across the development sphere, from peacebuilding to climate change.

Explore the full range of our work at [odi.org/gender](https://odi.org/gender)

# Priority areas

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- ▶ Political and economic empowerment and leadership
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Health, physical integrity and psychosocial well-being
- ▶ Reducing risk and promoting gender-transformative humanitarian action
- ▶ Gender norms and institutional change
- ▶ Gender equality in development practice



# Political and economic empowerment and leadership

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ODI's research aims to understand critical barriers to and opportunities for women's and girls' greater agency – including economic and political empowerment.

Our analysis on youth skills, women's employment and the care economy has informed donor, government and international policy processes. Our work explores adolescent girls' economic empowerment, including skills development and access to productive assets, credit and decent employment; gendered experiences of the 'gig economy'; women's access to, and control over, land; and gender norms that limit women's financial inclusion and economic empowerment.

ODI's work on political voice and leadership, including in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, highlights how women are exercising influence over, and access to, decision-making roles and processes. We analyse women's experience of formal political spaces and the informal rules of political negotiation and agenda-setting at global, national and local levels. We also explore how adolescent girls develop voice and agency in household, school and community life.

## Find out more



Women's economic empowerment: navigating enablers and constraints



Gender and youth livelihoods programming in Africa



Women's voice and leadership: assessing the evidence



Women and the 'Uber-isation' of domestic work



# Education

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Education is at the heart of female empowerment. ODI identifies good practices and innovative approaches in education that enhance gender equality. Our analysis examines how formal and informal education contributes to girls' skills and wider agency, for example in life decisions such as marriage.

We also explore ways to mitigate threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts, and strategies to combat gender-based violence in schools.

Our research examines the effectiveness of life skills education in helping boys develop gender-equitable attitudes and behaviour. Recent work also brings together evidence on educational opportunities and outcomes for adolescents and young people with disabilities in nine countries, and examines the effectiveness of affirmative action in schools and higher education for marginalised children and youth.

## Find out more



Mitigating threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts



How to deliver the G7's ambitious commitments to gender equality and girls' education



Documenting good practice in girls' education and gender equality



Adolescents with disabilities: enhancing resilience and delivering inclusive development

[odi.org/gender](https://odi.org/gender)

# Health, physical integrity and psychosocial well-being

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Our research on gender and health spans sexual and reproductive health, gender-based and sexual violence, maternal and child health, HIV and AIDS and tropical disease.

Highlights include service provision in fragile and post-conflict contexts; multi-level analyses of health systems; community approaches to addressing barriers to service uptake and access; and the social relations and gender norms determining health disparities.

Our partners include leading global health organisations, universities, community associations and journals such as *The Lancet*.

Our growing programme on gender, mental health and psychosocial well-being adds depth and nuance to an area traditionally dominated by biomedical approaches. We research and analyse risk factors and protective measures among children, adolescents and older people.

## Find out more



Family planning: the adolescent imperative



Mental health and psychosocial support service provision for adolescent girls in post-conflict settings



Men and intimate partner violence: from research to action



How to reduce inequalities in access to WASH

[odi.org/gender](https://odi.org/gender)





# Reducing risk and promoting gender-transformative humanitarian action

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Social exclusion and inequality exacerbate the vulnerabilities of people exposed to natural hazard-related disasters, and those living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. We document how social identities, including gender, influence the impact of climate and disaster hazards and conflict, violence and fragility. Our applied research informs the design and implementation of inclusive resilience programming.

Discriminatory norms become more acute in conflict, yet these are often not taken into account in humanitarian response. Women leaders and women's organisations are integral to the resilience of disaster- and crisis-affected communities, and disasters and crises can be an opportunity to shift gender norms.

Our growing body of work on gender-transformative humanitarian action aims to help establish how and where gender equality has been advanced during crisis, and promote its uptake by practitioners and policy-makers.

## Find out more



Gender and resilience: from theory to practice



Disasters and violence against women and girls: can disasters shake social norms and power relations?



Assessment of the evidence of links between gender equality, peacebuilding and statebuilding



10 things to know: gender equality and achieving climate goals

# Gender norms and institutional change

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ODI's work on gender norms seeks to enhance understanding of the implicit, informal rules that influence attitudes and behaviours, and how they impact on gender relations, equality and empowerment. Our research aims to understand the underlying drivers of discriminatory and harmful norms, and propose evidence-informed pathways to gender justice. Our propositions are underpinned by a nuanced understanding of how gender-based rights can be realised in complex cultural and political contexts.

ODI works to place these unseen norms on the agenda, identifying where and how they are detrimental – from keeping girls out of school to excluding women from decision-making – and identifying solutions in political, civil, social, legal and economic structures, alongside measures to enhance personal efficacy and agency.

Our researchers have significantly strengthened partner capacity to identify discriminatory gender norms and actively engage with policy-makers nationally and internationally.

## Find out more



Transforming the world for girls: podcast series



Frequently asked questions about gender norms



Women and power: shaping the development of Kenya's 2010 constitution



Girls' clubs and gender norm change

[odi.org/gender](https://odi.org/gender)

# Gender equality in development practice

ODI undertakes impact evaluations and systematic evidence reviews to identify and advance best practice in addressing gender inequality in development practice.

Our GAGE project critically assesses programmes on gender and adolescence, implementing research involving vulnerable adolescents, including refugees, adolescents with disabilities, those out of school, married girls and adolescent mothers.

Recent systematic reviews have covered media interventions to address norm change, the efficacy of girls' clubs and projects to address negative masculinities for boys.

ODI's work on women's empowerment has contributed to thinking on political economy analysis and politically smart development, ensuring that interventions are adapted to local contexts and supporting locally driven efforts that harness the resources of key actors, alliances and institutions.

Our researchers apply their expertise in fiscal policy to gender-responsive budgeting and advise governments on using policy-making processes to advance gender equality.

## Find out more



Changing gender norms: monitoring and evaluating programmes and projects



Adolescent perspectives on services and programmes in conflict-affected contexts: a participatory research toolkit



Using adaptive development to support feminist action



Gender-responsive public expenditure management

[odi.org/gender](https://odi.org/gender)







# Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE)

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GAGE is a nine-year longitudinal research programme following 18,000 adolescent girls and boys in six countries.

GAGE generates evidence on ways to enable adolescents to move out of poverty and exclusion. The results are intended to help policy and programme actors to more effectively advance adolescents' well-being and meet the commitment to 'leave no one behind'.

The GAGE consortium convenes 35 research, policy and programming partners globally. GAGE is funded by UK Aid.

Find out more [\*\*gage.odi.org\*\*](https://gage.odi.org)



## Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms (ALIGN)

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ALIGN connects a global community of researchers, policy-makers and practitioners challenging and changing harmful gender norms affecting adolescents and young adults.

By developing and sharing information and innovation, the ALIGN digital platform and community of practice advances understanding of gender norms and how knowledge on norm change can contribute to sustainable gender justice.

ALIGN is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Find out more [alignplatform.org](https://alignplatform.org)

# Social protection

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ODI brings gender equality and women's empowerment to the forefront of social protection policy.

We design practical guidance for assessing poverty and vulnerability with a gender lens, and offer policy-makers and practitioners insights on how to design, implement and evaluate social protection programmes to ensure gender-equitable outcomes.

Find out more **'Leaving no one behind':  
extending social protection to excluded groups**





A woman in traditional Guatemalan dress, including a white shawl with a large pink and yellow floral pattern and a long, dark, patterned skirt, is walking from left to right. She is pushing a blue bicycle. In the background, there is a large, rusty metal sign with the word 'BIENVENIDOS' in large, blue, block letters. Below it, the word 'A SEPUR' is partially visible in red letters. The sign is mounted on a wall and is surrounded by a chain-link fence. The ground is dry and dusty, and there is some sparse vegetation in the background.

# BIENVENIDOS

## A SEPUR

### Women on the bench

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This four-year project explores women's experience of judicial office in fragile and conflict-affected contexts including Afghanistan, Angola, Guatemala, Haiti and Uganda.

It considers three key areas: the gendered experience of access to judicial office; women's experience on the bench; and the impact on judicial outcomes of more women in judicial office.

Funded by the Norwegian Research Council, it is a collaboration between ODI, the Christian Michelsen Institute, the University of Bergen and CIESAS in Mexico.



# ODI experts

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Find all of ODI's experts on gender at [odi.org/gender](https://odi.org/gender)



ODI is an independent, global think tank, working for a sustainable and peaceful world in which every person thrives. We harness the power of evidence and ideas through research and partnership to confront challenges, develop solutions, and create change.

Photos:

- Cover: International Women's Day in the Rohingya refugee camps, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/Allison Joyce.
- Page 4: Children play football in a camp for refugees from Central African Republic in Cameroon. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown.
- Page 8: Daw San Mya Aye, health visitor and head midwife at work in Sin Tet Maw village, Rakhine State, Myanmar. Photo: ICRC/Minzayar Oo.
- Page 12: Children learn basic numeracy and literacy at a mobile crèche in Delhi, India. Photo: ODI/Atul Loke.
- Page 13: School children in Bangladesh. Photo: Scott Wallace/World Bank.
- Page 14: Sandy Lyen, a young artisan woodworker and entrepreneur from Beirut, Lebanon. Photo: UN Women/Joe Saade.
- Pages 15–16: A Q'eqchi' woman wheels a bicycle through Sepur Zarco, Guatemala. Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown.
- Page 18: A dance class at the Adi Harush refugee camp in Ethiopia. Photo: ODI/Gabriel Pecot.

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