



# Gender justice for adolescent girls: tackling social institutions

## Towards a conceptual framework

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### Abstract

Mainstream development actors are increasingly recognising the value of investment in girls and young women yet limited inroads have been made into achieving meaningful change, particularly in areas such as early marriage and pregnancy, maternal mortality, and gender-based violence. It is critical therefore that broader poverty reduction and development frameworks do not simply ‘add girls and stir’ to existing approaches but rather integrate a more nuanced understanding of gender discriminatory social institutions and related change pathways.

This paper outlines the evolution of our own interpretation of gendered social institutions, including the move to the more precise definition of gender discriminatory laws, norms and practices and related values. It presents a modified conceptual framework building on the OECD framework and outlines the focus of our analysis on adolescence as a pivotal life stage.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Framing our research question

Mainstream development actors are increasingly recognising the value of investment in girls and young women - and there has been remarkable progress over the last two decades in some areas (particularly education). However, in other areas, including early marriage and pregnancy, maternal mortality, and gender-based violence, there have been very limited inroads into achieving meaningful change. It is critical therefore that broader poverty reduction and development frameworks do not simply ‘add girls and stir’ to existing approaches but rather integrate a more nuanced understanding of gender discriminatory social institutions and related change pathways. By discriminatory social institutions we mean the collection of formal and informal laws, norms and practices which have an effect on human capabilities by either limiting or enabling individual and collective agency. These institutions often have an influence far greater than generally appreciated in shaping development outcomes.

The initial flagship work plan conceptualised ‘discriminatory social institutions’ based on an adaptation of the OECD Social institutions and Gender index (SIGI). As we describe below, both our own and the SIGI framework have evolved and we now here present a modified conceptual framework based on scoping papers and a framing workshop undertaken in the first quarter of 2012.

We first describe the evolution of the SIGI framework and offer a critique of the indices and problems stemming from the particular delineation of gendered institutions. We then outline the related development of our own interpretation of gendered social institutions before presenting concerns relating to the numerous interpretations of the term ‘institution’ by multiple development actors. This leads us to conclude that the term social institution must be used with some caution and thus whilst we will continue to use the term ‘social institution’, we prefer to refer in our text more precisely to the set of gender discriminatory laws, norms<sup>1</sup> and practices and related values<sup>2</sup>, to which the term refers and which are under consideration.

We then describe the focus of our analysis as pertaining specifically to adolescence as a pivotal life stage. Our analysis identifies that adolescence has typically received limited research attention and has been identified in policy terms mainly in relation to sexual and reproductive health or unemployment concerns (Watson, 2012). Research has, however, revealed it as a pivotal life phase, with considerable enduring socialisation effects and important preparation for key transitions to adult roles, including transitions to work, citizenship, marriage and parenthood (Watson, 2012). Importantly, such preparations are also rooted in very early life stages, and

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1 Social norms are rules about behaviour that reflect and embody prevailing cultural values and are backed by sanctions – either formal or informal. They are about what a group deems to be good, proper, acceptable or bad.

2 Values are the commonly held standards of what is acceptable or unacceptable, important or unimportant, right or wrong, workable or unworkable in a community or society.

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evolve through adolescence into young adulthood. Current initiatives reveal a generally segmented approach to girls, not linked to a broader life cycle or social institutional context or to broader social forces and exclusionary and discriminatory contexts (ibid). As a result our context-specific understandings of adolescence and the role that discriminatory norms and practices play in shaping girls' experiences of this life stage remains quite limited – and as we discuss further below this is a dimension we will seek to address through our country case studies in our first year of fieldwork in 2012. Our literature scoping also identified a lack of disaggregated data and rigorous assessment of programmes and policies aimed at promoting girls' empowerment and inclusion highlighting the need for a more in-depth and strategic analytical focus in this area.

## 1.2 Key strands of our analytical framework

In identifying discriminatory social institutions and the laws, norms and practices which deny girls the ability to reach their full potential, we are seeking to understand how this potential is both constructed and limited. We suggest two key analytical threads and policy perspectives to enhance our understanding: the concepts of capabilities and entitlements. Both of these have potential for analysing and acting upon systemic gender inequalities. The following section thus explores aspects of the *capabilities* frameworks, including the diverse definitions and interpretations of capabilities and the ways in which this has been applied to adolescence and girls. We then discuss the *entitlements* approach which is informed by a rights perspective and considers the range of key economic, socio-cultural and political entitlements fundamental to a transformative approach to development and the achievement of social justice. Both of these approaches inform our development of an analytical framework to enhance adolescent girls' capabilities by addressing discriminatory social institutions, and more specifically the discriminatory practices and non-actions which compromise girls' development. Our end goal is to explore notions of and approaches to achieving gender justice, bridging thinking around capabilities and rights (both the absence of discrimination and positive rights).

This framework is in turn underpinned by thinking about the intimate linkages between discriminatory norms practices and group perceptions of social identity, themselves driven by collectively agreed upon understandings and belief systems surrounding group membership (such as gender, age, class, ethnicity, religion), and related systems of power relations (whether it be patriarchy, age-based hierarchies, capitalist modes of production, etc.). The resulting norms, values and attitudes can have positive, neutral or negative effects; in their negative form, they can be discriminatory in nature. This discrimination results in exclusion and restricted opportunities to develop capabilities, the outcomes of which are limited potential, restricted development and disempowerment. According to this framework, the overarching aim of policy and practice actions are intended to address both the manifestations or outcomes of such social institutions as well as the driving forces of discrimination - the norms, values and attitudes and the practices derived from them, which lead to negative outcomes.

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# 2 Initial Conceptualisation of Discriminatory Social Institutions

## 2.1 <sup>3</sup>Conceptualisation of girl's exclusion and social institutions

Our initial focus on childhood, adolescence and early adulthood was based on the fact that this life stage is critical in determining life-course potential. Physical and neurological development and social, educational and work skills attainment are all decisive development and learning acquisitions. Yet this key period remains for many girls and young women one of deprivation, danger and vulnerability, resulting in a significant lack of agency and critical development deficits, with often life-course consequences. More than 100 million girls are expected to marry between 2005 and 2015 (Clark, 2004) bringing the known dangers of early pregnancy. Girls under 20 giving birth face double the risk of dying in childbirth compared with women over 20, and girls under age 15 are five times as likely to die as those in their 20s (UNFPA, 2003). This leads to 60,000 to 70,000 girls aged 15 to 19 dying from complications of pregnancy and childbirth every year (WHO, 2008d, in Temin et al., 2010).

Meanwhile, it is estimated that more than 130 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM) or cutting (FGC) (hereafter referred to as FGM/C), mainly in Africa and some Middle Eastern countries, and 2 million girls a year are at risk of mutilation (UN General Assembly, 2006). Moreover, young women are particularly vulnerable to coerced sex and are increasingly being infected with HIV and AIDS. Over half of new HIV infections worldwide are occurring among young people between the ages of 15 and 24, and more than 60 percent of HIV-positive youth in this age bracket are female (UNIFEM, 2010). Two-thirds of the 137 million illiterate young people in the world are women (UNFPA, 2007), and in 2007 girls accounted for 54 percent of the world's out-of-school population (UN, 2009). Over 100 million girls between 5 and 17 years old are involved in child labour all over the world, and the majority are engaged in hazardous work, including domestic service (ILO, 2009). As a result of the gendered division of labour, time poverty is a central feature of the lives of many girls and young women. In Mexico, for instance, evidence shows that girls spend 175 percent more time on household tasks than boys (Brunnich et al., 2005). In a recent study of 35 countries, between 10 and 52 percent of women were found

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<sup>3</sup> Text from 2.1 and 2.2 is drawn from our report: Stemming girls chronic poverty, 2010 : Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

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to have experienced physical violence at some point in their lives in all countries, of these, between 10 and 30 percent reported sexual violence (WHO, 2005).

In many cases, these overlapping and intersecting experiences of deprivation, foregone human development opportunities and abuse or exploitation serve to perpetuate and intensify poverty of girls and women over the life-course.

Of note, however, is the relatively limited attention that has been paid to gender dynamics in scholarship on chronic poverty, especially vis-à-vis girls. Much of the research that does consider gender tends to treat it (and often just sex) as one variable among many that increase vulnerability and exclusion (e.g. Bhide and Mehta, 2008; Bhutta and Sharma, 2006; Lawson et al., 2003; McKay, 2009; Mosley, 2005; Osmani, 2007; Silver, 2007). Accordingly, there is frequent mention of the particular vulnerabilities faced by female-headed households and widows (Heslop and Gorman, 2002), insecure asset and inheritance rights for women, the risk of chronically poor women transferring their poverty status in intergenerational terms (Smith and Moore, 2006), socio-cultural expectations around marriage and dowry (Quisumbing, 2008 and CPRC, 2008) and mobility restrictions and migration (Kothari, 2002 and Bird et al., 2002). There is, however, little sustained treatment of gender as a specific site of disadvantage and social exclusion (Colvin et al., 2009). Important exceptions include work by Baulch and Quisumbing (2009), Cooper (2008; 2010), Quisumbing (2006; 2007; 2008) and Tudawe (2001) on assets and inheritance; by Slater (2008) on the linkages between HIV/AIDS, asset depletion and increased care burdens for women (Pelham, 2007, and De Coninck and Drani, 2009); by Hickey (2007; 2009) on the gendered and gendering nature of citizenship; by the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC, 2008) on the importance of women's movements and collective action; by Deshingkar (2009), Doane (2007) and Shah and Mehta (2008) on the importance of improving working conditions for women; and by Moore et al. (2008) on linkages between gender and conflict. In terms of specific research on girls' and adolescents' experiences of chronic poverty, the knowledge base is thinner still.

There is, however, a fledgling body of work that looks at linkages between poverty dynamics and education, HIV/AIDS and protection from exploitation and abuse. Rose and Dyer (2008) identify girls' education as widely understood to lead to reduced fertility and lower infant mortality and morbidity, although they argue that there is a need for more research into what produces the link between education and poverty reduction. Hossain (2008) discusses gender differentials in education in Bangladesh, and demonstrates that, among the poorest, boys are most likely to be excluded from primary education and are subject to increasing social exclusion. Quisumbing's work (2007) considers girls in terms of differences in household allocation of resources and care between children, arguing that children may not all be shown the same level of concern and that levels of concern may vary over time. She identifies the perceived low return from investments in children as a 'stumbling block,' stressing that investments in boys may be considered a type of insurance for old age. Seeley (2008) draws on this framework to examine the impact of HIV/AIDS on children in Uganda, arguing that more attention needs to be paid to relationships beyond the parent-child relationship and what can reasonably be expected from investments in a child. Moore (2005) specifically considers youth poverty through the lens of intergenerational poverty. She argues that life-course events such as leaving school, starting work and bearing children play a central role in vulnerability to poverty, and that how these events are experienced is closely related to parental poverty and childhood deprivation.

Young women are considered in terms of the impact of maternal nutrition and education on future children. Finally, the vulnerability of girls to violence and

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sexual abuse is discussed by De Coninck and Drani (2009), who examine the vulnerabilities of Ugandan girls who have been married early and those who rely on transactional sex, and by Cramer (2008), who considers the vulnerability of girls to sex work in situations of conflict as a survival strategy to pay for school fees, food and shelter. Moore et al. (2008) also deal with sex work in conflict situations and the potential exclusion of women and girls from their communities as a result.

Despite this lack of focus and analysis on poverty, gender and girls, available evidence suggests that investing in girls is one of the smartest moves a country can make. This evidence will not be re-iterated here (although a summary of findings from our initial scoping exercise can be found in the appendices).

## 2.2 The importance of social institutions

Poverty research has historically focused on material manifestations of poverty (measured by income and basic human development indicators such as educational enrolment and nutritional status). However, the role that social risks and vulnerabilities play in perpetuating chronic poverty and propelling people into poverty has been gaining recognition over the past decade (CPRC, 2008-9). Accordingly, in our original research we developed a focus on social institutions (Branisa et al., 2009a) – the collection of formal and informal laws, norms and practices which have an effect on human capabilities by either limiting or enabling individual and collective agency and is paramount in combating such social risks. These social institutions, we suggested, have far greater influence than is generally appreciated in shaping developmental outcomes.

However, international development action over the past 50 years has generally treated social institutions as fixed and largely untouchable, either looking to science and technology to modernise societies or focusing on free markets (misguidedly treated as devoid of social aspects) to bring about change (Attaran, 2005; Easterly, 2006; Ferguson, 1994; Rao and Walton, 2004). This has been reinforced by a tendency in poverty research to focus on material manifestations of poverty (measured by income and basic human development indicators), and it is only more recently that social risks and vulnerabilities have been considered in relation to the role they play in both perpetuating poverty and propelling people into poverty. Amartya Sen (2004) suggests that this neglect or what he terms ‘comparative indifference’ to the importance of ‘the social,’ needs remedying.

Laws, norms and practices are part of the wider ‘cultures’ that inform multiple aspects of our behaviour and our societies. Importantly, culture is not an untouchable and permanent fixture. Rather, it is always in flux and contested, constantly being shaped by human interaction (Rao and Walton, 2004). Indeed, this malleability is a vital aspect of the transformative social change required to enable equitable development and social justice. Such change has been seen in many societies and is central to inclusive policies and action.

It is, however, critical to emphasise that cultural norms and practices can endure across time and space by adapting to new contexts, including demographic, socioeconomic and technological changes. For example, as we discuss in Chapter 2 on Son Bias, traditional practices of female infanticide in some societies are increasingly being replaced by female foeticide, facilitated by the availability of new reproductive technologies, especially among better-off wealth quintiles. Importantly, social institutions are not inherently good or bad. Rather, they provide



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the parameters or social framework in which individuals and groups are able to develop their human capabilities. When they result in processes that lead to inequality, discrimination and exclusion, they become detrimental to development. Thus, our argument is that social institutions can and should enhance human capabilities but, when they instead cause harm, action should be taken to reform and reshape them.

Those institutions we focused on initially are currently detrimental to gender equality and to the empowerment of girls and young women, and influence the possibility of their falling into long-term poverty. In analysing the situation of girls, we here choose to focus on social impediments to the realisation of their capabilities, impediments which also result in material deprivation. Too often, policymakers, donors and development practitioners focus on supply-side measures, such as the provision of services and technologies, but overlook the importance of informing the choice of any intervention with a clear analysis of the socio-cultural dynamics that may impede the uptake and effective enjoyment of the benefits of those services (e.g. Sen and Ostlin, 2010). Even in the case of development approaches that seek to strengthen demand, attention to the complexity of social factors that may influence the patterning of demand is often too limited, as the growing body of work on gender and social protection initiatives, such as cash transfers and public works programmes, highlights (e.g. Holmes and Jones, 2010; Molyneux, 2008). In our initial work, we focused in particular on five specific institutions identified by the OECD SIGI, which include discriminatory family codes and resource entitlements, son bias, gender-based violence and restricted freedoms in terms of physical mobility and societal participation.

Practices stemming from these institutions may result in a myriad of development deficits and/or physical and psychological trauma, such as early marriage, inequitable inheritance, FGM/C, assault and abuse, limited access to productive assets, servitude and exploitation, high rates of infant and maternal malnutrition, morbidity and mortality and low educational achievement, among other outcomes (Amnesty International, 2010; Plan International, 2009). These barriers to human development can lead to and perpetuate chronic poverty and vulnerability over the course of childhood and adulthood, and potentially in intergenerational terms. It is our contention that efforts to reform or reshape these social institutions will substantially contribute towards improving development outcomes in general and the multidimensional well-being of girls and young women in particular.

### 2.3 SIGI description

The OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) was jointly developed in 2009 by the University of Göttingen and the OECD Development Centre to help fill an observed gap in information and analysis on discrimination against women. It was intended to complement existing gender equality indices which are seen to be primarily outcome-based measures of inequalities in well-being or agency, or measures of human rights<sup>4</sup> (UNDP, 1995; Lopez-Claros and Zahidi, 2005; Social Watch, 2005; The Economic Commission for Africa, 2004). SIGI arose from the premise that while discrimination against women has multiple facets, most research has focused primarily on a) the economic status and labour market participation of

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<sup>4</sup> These include the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) (United Nations Development Programme, 1995), the Global Gender Gap Index from the World Economic Forum (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi, 2005), the Gender Equity Index developed by Social Watch, 2005) or the African Gender Status Index proposed by the Economic Commission for Africa (Economic Commission for Africa, 2004); and the Women's Social Rights Index of the CIRI Human Rights Data Project1 (from SIGI technical paper).

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women; b) women's access to resources such as education and health; and c) the political participation and empowerment of women, with little attention to the underlying social institutions that are seen to impact on gender equality (Dreschler et al, 2008). For SIGI, 'social institutions' are defined as *long-lasting codes of conduct, norms, traditions, and formal and informal laws* that need to be taken into account in the analysis of women's overall socio-economic status. Such institutions are considered to be key drivers or determinants of gender outcomes in outcome domains such as education, health, political representation and labour markets (Branisa et al., 2009a; OECD, 2010 Atlas of Gender and Development). SIGI uses information drawn from the OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-Database) covering over 160 countries (Morrison and Jütting, 2005; Jütting, Morrison, Dayton-Johnson and Drechsler, 2008). Indicators have been developed to measure gender inequality in twelve individual social institutions indicators (variously termed 'key variables' or 'dimensions') grouped into five main categories (variously referred to as components, sub-indices, or 'concepts') (Branisa et al,2009b). The five sub-indices and their component variables are shown in Box 1.

### Box 1: SIGI categories and component variables

- **Family Code** refers to institutions that influence the decision-making power of women in the household, based on information on marriage customs and inheritance. In this domain, SIGI measures the variables of *early marriage* (% of girls between 15-19 who were ever married); *polygamy* (acceptance of polygamy in the population or legality of polygamy in a country); *parental authority* (women's right to be legal guardian of a child during the marriage and women's custody rights over a child after divorce); and *inheritance* (formal inheritance rights of spouses)
- **Civil liberties** captures the freedom of social participation of women. It measures two key variables including *freedom of movement* (the freedom of women to move outside the home); and *freedom of dress* (obligation of women to follow a certain dress code, for example to cover parts of their body in the public).
- **Physical integrity** comprises a number of different indicators on violence against women including the *existence of laws* against domestic violence, sexual assault or rape, and sexual harassment; and *female genital mutilation* (percentage of women who have undergone female genital mutilation).
- **Son Preference** is seen to reflect primarily the economic valuation of women and includes the variable '*missing women*' as measured by gender bias in mortality (based on estimates of gender differentials in mortality and on sex ratios of young people and adults).
- **Ownership rights** covers the access of women to several types of property including *land* (whether women are allowed to and can de facto own land); *bank loans* (whether women are allowed to and can de facto access credit); and *other property* (particularly property such as homes, but also other material assets).

Source: Branisa et al, 2009b

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SIGI covers only non-OECD countries because the selected variables are considered most relevant in these settings. Information on the five sub-indices aim to help policy-makers to identify key dimensions of social institutions related to gender inequality that need to be addressed in different settings, and to generate public discussion (Branisa et al., 2009a) Its developers note that ‘Empirical results confirm that the SIGI provides additional information to that of other well-known gender-related indices’ (ibid.). They note, however, that the indicators need to be complemented by careful investigation of each of the components, including utilisation of different data sources (such as DHS) and that additional qualitative information is needed to enhance understanding of the situation in each country (ibid.). Current thinking is contributing to a reformulation of certain of the categories and sub-categories of SIGI as well as to a refinement of some of the indicators. It is important to note that the choice of relevant indicators is very much constrained by limitations in available data.

SIGI has the advantage of bringing socio-cultural structures, systems and institutions into the forefront of analysis of gender inequalities, rightly noting that these have been neglected aspects of analysis in mainstream gender and development work (though not, it must be noted, in academic streams of knowledge in disciplines such as feminist studies, anthropology or sociology...). SIGI developers acknowledge that the GID-DB is a first attempt to introduce social institutions into the debate, but that it cannot provide a comprehensive account of all traditions and cultural practices that affect the role of women, which is one of the reasons why the OECD Development Centre has constructed an Internet platform (Wiki-Gender) to allow an exchange of views and perceptions, challenge existing information and modify and improve the data. It is recognized that *‘Only then will we have a better understanding of the manifold ways in which social institutions affect women’s development and can construct policies that effectively address the current situation’* (Dreschler et al., 2008). The discussion below is intended as a contribution to this process of collective thinking, raising a number of issues related to the parameters and conceptual bases for SIGI and its indicators.

## 2.4 SIGI indices and selection criteria

The SIGI functions as an index and as such is limited by the necessity of linking measurable data to each of the institutions in order to track change. The indicators it thus uses do not therefore necessarily reflect the range or the importance of specific issues per identified institution, rather they may be a compromise relating to data availability. The criteria for selection of the indices, the scope of the institutions and the different weights and dimensions of the sub-indices can be questioned as outlined in Box 2. These factors are known well to the SIGI team, who recognise the compromises necessary in order to construct an international database and are additionally regularly searching for new data or proxies to be able to capture more subtle dimensions of discrimination.

### Box 2: Shortcomings of the SIGI

Without a doubt SIGI has already served as an important tool among the development community in moving discussions forward on the problematic of institutionalised and deeply embedded nature of discriminatory gendered social norms, values and practices. The index does however suffer from a number of key weaknesses as follows:

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*The scope of the institutions*, as measured by the indicators, is not always complete. For example: the first sub-index ‘family code’ refers to a key social institution that forms the basis for regulation of kinship as well as processes of production and reproduction, yet the indicators capture only limited dimensions of analysis. What about systems and effects of bride wealth and dowry, the prevalence of arranged marriages, practices such as the levirate, family composition (nuclear/extended) and residence patterns (patri-local, etc. where young brides fall under the influence of the mother-in-law, with all that might imply in terms of restricted autonomy...). On inheritance matters, why treat only spousal inheritance and not children’s inheritance? Where do issues to do with women’s fertility (control, expectations, reproductive health, treatment and care) come in? (recognising that SIGI is attempting to find data on this) And what about the key concept of household, the relationship between families and households, and the gendered division of labour within the household, which is not captured explicitly in any of the other indicators either but which is a crucial feature patterning persistent gender inequalities in many settings : Would this, perhaps, need to be posited as a separate ‘institution’? Again recognising that the SIGI team are attempting to find data in this area.

The *different weights and dimensions* of the sub-indices do not always seem comparable and some might in fact be subsumed under others. ‘Son preference’, for example, could equally appear within the first category of ‘family’ (stressing its ideological linkage to lineage systems favoring male heirs) or within the category of ‘physical integrity (stressing female foeticide and infanticide as extreme forms of violence against women and girls). Is it really a stand-alone category the same as the others? And does it primarily measure, as posited, the economic (vs social) valuation of women<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the SIGI developers note that the category ‘missing women’ was initially subsumed under physical integrity, but that statistical analysis identified it as an anomaly within that category, suggesting that it was actually more a measure of son preference under scarce resources while the category of Violence against women and female genital mutilation measure treatment of women that is not only motivated by economic considerations. It was therefore re-cast as a category on its own as ‘son preference’ (Branisa et al., 2009a) and remains a subject of debate.

*Overlap in SIGI categories*: This reflects, to some extent the complex interrelationships at play among the various dimensions, but also, perhaps, points to some problems with the categories themselves). In a similar vein, there is no clear conceptualisation/problematisation of the household (as opposed to family) as a key gendered social institution. This leads to difficulties in fully developing the analysis of the gendered division of labour within the household and incorporating important insights stemming from recent analyses of women and the ‘care economy’. Another example relates to the concept of physical insecurity/ limited physical integrity, or gender-based violence? The initial SIGI concept of ‘physical integrity’ captures most precisely, perhaps, the issue of women’s bodies as contested domains, though it does not, it might be argued, go far enough in offering

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indicators to measure this in all of its multiple dimensions, including, for example, indicators for control of fertility, access to reproductive health information and services, measures to combat sexual trafficking, etc.

## 2.5 Strengths and weaknesses of the approach

The social institutions approach has many strengths, not least rendering visible for policy makers a realm of discrimination often relegated to the seemingly ‘untouchable’ category of ‘culture’. For this reason it remains an important approach to discrimination. However, some of the challenges in terms of adequately delineating gender discrimination need specific attention. And indeed many are related to the complexities of conceptualising the links between girls’ wellbeing and gendered social institutions which stem from the broader conceptual, analytical and data-related challenges identified for SIGI as a whole. Obviously an added layer of challenge pertains to our focus on girls and young women as opposed to women as a whole – not only is there limited age-disaggregated data in this area but there are also concerns related to a lack of clear conceptualisation of adolescence as a discrete category for policy analysis and action (Watson, 2012, p8) as well as the dearth of a sufficiently concrete and tailored rights-based framework for this age group (adolescents tend to fall through the gap – neither prioritised within e.g. the UNCRC (1991) nor in CEDAW (1979)).

Outside of these broad limitations and the critique of the specific SIGI variables outlined above in Box 2, there are some additional issues to consider as follows:

- *Limited direct attention to the links between gender inequalities and access to critical social goods and services:* This seems to be a particular gap that arises from the framework provided by SIGI, limiting the scope for the development of related policy recommendations. For example, our *Catalysing Social Change* report included, under the rubric of ‘son bias’ analysis of differential parental investments in girls and boys within the household (which helps explain some of the demand-side problems associated, with, for example, lower educational levels for girls in some societies, certain health and nutrition deficits, etc). However, this provides only part of the story, leaving out the responsibility for gender-sensitive educational provision by the state. In rights-based approaches, analysis needs to focus on all ‘duty-bearers’, including both parents and public officials.

Similar problems/limitations beset the analysis of gendered inequalities in ‘resource rights and entitlements’, due in part to the fact that the SIGI framework initially couched this category in terms of ownership rights over material goods. While this was expanded somewhat in our *Catalysing Social Change* report, beyond issues of control over personal resources, further reflection might be needed as to how best to frame the analysis of gendered differentials in claims on and access to public goods and services, such as health, nutrition/food security, education and training, information and information technology, legal services/protection and the like.

- *Limited attention to the multi-layered interplay of gender norms, roles and power relations from the micro- through to macro-levels:* A preliminary analytical foundation of this sort might help pave the way for a fuller and more direct analysis of both ideological and behavioural patterns of

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socialisation (within family and household, but also through the school, in the public domain, through structures of communication, religion, political representation, etc.) that serve as channels of transmission for gender inequalities and thus reinforce their reproduction.

At the micro-level, the basic processes at work in the social construction of gender, including the powerful mechanisms through which ideologies of masculinities and femininities are created and reinforced. The very construction of male and female ‘personhood’ (including persistent concepts of women as perpetual minors) and the roles, responsibilities and rights which accrue to each is an important analytical domain, which requires analysis of laws and informal codes beyond those that pertain to the family (as in the category family code’). These are often dealt with within personal status codes (often highly contested) but continue to operate according to the more informal rules and customs of particular societies.

At the macro-level, more could be done to interrogate in particular country contexts what Connell (1987) refers to as the broader *gender regime*—the state of play in gender relations in a given institution—and *gender order*—the gender patterns in a society at a specific point in history. These concepts have been applied widely to gender analyses of institutions and to understandings of nation-building projects and state modernisation. For example, Besse (1996) looks at the way industrialisation and intensification of mercantile relations in Brazil in the Vargas era (1914–30) created new opportunities for middle-class and elite women to gain an education, have a career and postpone marriage. State policymakers and the Catholic Church, worried that this shift was challenging the foundations of Brazilian society, attempted to influence the situation through policies such as new ‘scientific’ forms of child rearing and special women’s education to provide ‘the modern Brazilian woman’ with a sense of fulfilment and at the same time bolster the family. However, although gender roles were modernised, the changes were not transformative: they simply restructured male domination.

- *Limited attention to lifecycle differences*: a life cycle approach may be the most analytically useful as a means of illuminating inequalities through the lens of both gender and generations, which in turn may be of most relevance in attempts to trace the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Within such an approach, however, the challenge would still remain one of maintaining a specific focus on girls, adolescents and young women and identifying the changing laws, norms and practices which pertain to different parts of the life-cycle.

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# 3 Defining social institutions

## 3.1 Social science and ‘the Institution’

*‘In the social sciences the concept of institutions has been used broadly and in a variety of ways and often the literature has failed to provide a clear context of the concept, leading to controversies and confusion for the reader’ (Boliari, 2007).*

A concept with which many social science disciplines have engaged in-depth<sup>5</sup>, the definition of ‘institution’ remains highly contested. There is no one precise, comprehensive, and commonly accepted definition of institutions, leading to a surprising degree of conceptual confusion in both ordinary language and in the application of a ‘social institutions’ approach to social analysis. The heterogeneity and multi-faceted nature of the phenomena, labelled as institutions, range from: patterned behaviours and practices; social relations and interactions; cultural beliefs, norms and expectations; rules and procedures; ideology; social policies; organisations; legal systems and statuses; constraints, hierarchies and power, to name but a few (Martin, 2004). (Box 3 provides an overview of just some of the widely diverse social phenomena that social scientists have analysed as institutions).

### Box 3: Diversity of phenomena dealt with as institutions within social science

While rarely giving reasons for doing so, social scientists apply the term *social institution* to an amazing array of phenomena, including, for example, taxation and handshakes (Bellah et al., 1991), schools (Dae et al., 2003), socialism (Parboteeah & Cullen, 2003), mental hospitals (Goffman 1962), courtship (Clark, 1997), community and property (Nisbet 1953), healing (Johnson 2000), sports (Anderson & Taylor, 2000); Messner 1992), appellate courts (March & Olsen, 1989), religion and marriage (Waite & Lehrer 2003), universities (Benschop & Brouns, 2003), heterosexuality (Rogers & Garret, 2001), and ‘proliferating going concerns’ (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, after Hughes [1942]).

Source: Martin, 2004

Three important elements in the literature that may have particular relevance to the current exercise, however, involve the following:

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<sup>5</sup> Sociology, for example, has been described by Durkheim, the ‘father’ of the discipline, as the ‘science of institutions, their genesis and their functioning’ (Durkheim, [1895] 1964, p. 45).

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1. **The degree to which institutions are defined primarily in terms of social norms, values, rules and beliefs on the one hand; or include also a focus on actual processes, practices and practitioners on the other hand, and the linkages that are seen to inhere between these two aspects.**

This seems to be a major source of confusion in the field, stemming from work by Talcott Parsons who effectively split the field when he defined institutions solely in terms of the normative ideas, rules and values underlying them (the so-called ‘subjectivist view’) in distinction from the modes and forms of organised behaviour, considered instead to be ‘organisations’ (the ‘objectivist’ view). A number of contemporary sociologists reject this split and argue for re-linking the ‘subjective’ and the ‘objective’ qualities of institutions so as to leave room for the interpretation of active construction of institutions through repeated actions ‘*cast into a pattern which can then be reproduced*’ (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Giddens (1984) perhaps exemplifies this view of institutions best, which he defines as ‘*recursive human practices through which group members constitute and reconstitute social institutions.*’ Such a view provides for clearer analysis of social interactions patterned within and through social institutions and more historical understandings of processes of change through human agency (Martin, 2004).

2. **The degree to which substantive domains are identified as institutions:**

A number of sociological definitions—taking as a starting point the view of a social institution as a complex, integrated set of social norms and practices organised around the preservation of basic societal needs and values—evoke normative systems and practices that operate in five basic areas of life, designated as the **primary institutions** (also sometimes called ‘meta-institutions’) (Miller, 2011). These are the institutions that (1) determine structures for kinship and reproduction (**family**); (2) provide for the legitimate use of power and administration (**government or polity**); (3) regulate the production and distribution of goods and services (**economy**); (4) transmit knowledge from one generation to the next (**education**); and (5) regulate our relation to the supernatural (**religion**). Other domains are sometimes added to this list such as legal systems and communication/media, medicine, language and the like: these are sometimes seen as cross-cutting, but sometimes analysed as institutions themselves, along with a host of other, more or less ‘lower level’ institutions (sociologyguide.com). Other contemporary social scientists (again Giddens 1984 stands out) object to defining institutions substantively, that is, by the domains they cover, on the basis that this suggests they are unchanging, immutable (see discussion in Martin, 2004). However, it is possible to conceive of the ‘domains’ or ‘meta institutions’ as providing the broad parameters within which various particular forms of different institutions are constructed and reproduced through practice based on particular values and norms. In other words, an institutional domain such as ‘family’ does not have one universal and unchanging form of content, but differs in form and settings.

3. **The distinction and inter-relationships between institutions and other social forms.**

One such distinction, as noted above, is between ‘organisations’, defined as units established to pursue particular goals, with boundaries, rules, procedures and means of communication and ‘institutions’, taken as a more abstract and all-encompassing concept. By one definition, organisations may be seen as ‘the *materialised expression*’ of the more general concept of institution (Kangas and Vestheim, 2010). Institutions may, in fact, encompass several different types of organisations



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(Wharton, 2011). They may also exist independently from organisations – for example language systems (Miller, 2011). The ‘new institutional analysis was in part a reaction to what was seen as earlier tendencies to conflate institutions with their structural form as ‘organisations’: the renewed focus on values, norms, and rules was an effort to broaden such perspectives, though it might be argued that in focusing on ‘the rules of the game’, other elements, such as the players and the game itself may have been lost (Mackay, 2011).

Another distinction is between institutions and social forms that are more complex and encompassing such as cultures (in the anthropological sense of the term) or societies, of which institutions are constituent parts (Kangas and Vestheim, 2010). The term ‘institution’ can variously refer to such large domains of social life or interaction, or particular sub-domains, which adds to conceptual confusion through different usages by different authors.

Distinctions are also sometimes made between ‘social institutions’ per se, conceptualised at the level of complex social forms, and the conventions, rules, social norms, roles and rituals that are seen to be among of their constituent parts (Miller, 2011). This, however, is not always the case. Social scientists who maintain the view of institutions as equivalent to a set of conventions, social norms and rules (such as North, quoted above, and – to some extent – the developers of the SIGI framework) are considered to be adherents of the ‘atomistic’ theories of institutions that have given rise to rational choice theory in certain schools of economics. Such ‘atomistic’ approaches are seen to contrast with more ‘holistic’ views, including structural-functionalism which stresses the inter-relationships of institutions (structure) and their contribution to larger and more complete social complexes such as societies (function) (key proponents include Radcliffe-Brown and Durkheim) (Miller, 2011). One way of conceptualizing differences among various social forms identified in the literature is presented in Box 4.

#### **Box 4: Social forms, structures and processes**

From a social science perspective, **social norms** are rules about behaviour that reflect and embody prevailing cultural values and are usually backed by **social sanctions** (formal and informal). **Values** are ideas held by individuals and groups about what is desirable, proper, good, or bad. **Networks** are the webs of human relationships (including dyadic, familial, social, etc.) through which **social exchange** occurs and social norms are played out. **Structures and institutions** are the patterned (and sometimes material and operational) manifestations of social norms and networks such as family units, organised religion, legislative and policy apparatus, educational systems, military and industrial organisations, and so on, in which **social interaction** is constructed, reshaped, and, often, controlled (see, for example, Giddens et al., 2009). In most settings, these social arrangements reflect and produce inequalities among groups.

Source: Auerbach et al., 2011 (emphasis added)

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## 3.2 Basic definitions and attributes

One broad definition of institutions that combines a number of the basic characteristics and elements mentioned above is ‘a complex of positions, roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organising relatively stable patterns of human activity with respect to fundamental problems in producing life-sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals, and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment’ (Turner, 1997).<sup>6</sup> Some social scientists emphasise the notion of constraints, in the form of both formal and informal rules, that help to enforce defined patterns of behaviour. According to this view, ‘Institutions are the rules of the game of a society, or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction. In consequence they structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social, or economic.’ (North, 1990). In this manner, one definition posits institutions as ‘embodied structures of roles and associated rules’ which, in addition to particular functions and structures, include specific sanctions, both formal and informal (Miller, 2011). Building on these broad definitions, for the purposes of our work we adopt Martin’s (2004) list of key criteria for deciding whether a particular phenomenon is a social institution or not:

1. **Institutions are basic social phenomena and characteristic of groups.** Institutions are constituted by collectivities of people who associate with each other extensively and, through interaction, develop recursive practices and associated meanings. One definition of society as a whole is ‘an agglomeration of institution’ (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).
2. **Institutions are enduring forms that persist across time and space.** Giddens (1984) characterises institutions as ‘the more enduring features of social life’ and most social scientists concur with this theme of persistence. Anthropological perspectives often tend to focus on endurance through ‘traditions’ and on the spatial contours of institutions, which they would analyse as particular ‘cultures’ distinct from others and therefore imbued with their own particular institutional forms. (It is to be noted that the concept of ‘culture’ is as slippery, if not more so, than institution, and open to widely diverse – and divisive - interpretations).
3. **Institutions entail distinct social practices that recur, recycle, or are repeated (over time) by group members.** This points to the importance of practice as a constitutive part of institutions. Through acting or doing, individually and collectively, group members constitute institutions. Some analysts (such as Barnes, 2001) equate social institutions with practices; others (Tuomela, 2003) view social institutions as ‘norm-governed social practices’; others acknowledge that institutions are ‘patterns of social activity that give shape to collective and individual experience’ (Bellah et al., 1991).

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<sup>6</sup> Anthony Giddens (1984) notes that ‘*Institutions by definition are the more enduring features of social life,*’ listing modes of discourse, political institutions, economic institutions and legal institutions among the key ‘institutional orders’. Friedland and Alford (1991) suggest that institutions are seen as so regular or permanent that they are often accepted as ‘*the way things are*’ (quoted in Wharton, 2011). According to this view, each institution has ‘*a central logic, a set of material practices and symbolic constructions*’ that include structures, patterns and routines as well as belief systems that supply them with meaning. Lodged within these logics are roles, positions and expectations for individuals.

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4. **Institutions both constrain and facilitate behaviours/actions by societal/group members.** While many social scientists emphasise the inhibiting and constraining features of institutions, which limit in some manner alternative choices of action through various forms of sanction and control; others identify an additional facilitating role for institutions that can be empowering for individual social actors or groups (see for example, March and Olsen, 1989).
  5. **Institutions have social positions and relations that are characterised by particular expectations, rules/norms, and procedures.** An institution entails a set of social positions that are interrelated and are enacted relative to each other. The behaviour of individuals in these positions is shaped by widely shared but potentially contested shared cultural rules or norms. Early sociological thinking around 'roles' and 'statuses' in society as a whole distinguished between 'ascribed' status (such as gender, race/ethnicity, class) and achieved statuses (based on efforts of the individual), each of which is seen to be accompanied by certain expectations and/or enforced adherence to particular sets of behaviours (roles). More recent thinking has departed from the more rigid and static application of such a paradigm in order to emphasise the malleability of such 'statuses' which can be changed through individual and collective action.
  6. **Institutions are constituted and reconstituted by embodied agents.** This is an important concept that brings aspects related to the physical body of human actors into the broader domain of social analysis in a manner that helps avoid biological reductionism (Connell, 1987). Institutions persist because embodied agents continually constitute them, though in varying ways. Giddens (1984) has been influential in 'reinstating' the body and embodiment in institutional dynamics, a theme that is particularly important and further developed in feminist theory and analysis of gender and sexualities as well as the analysis of gender-based violence.
  7. **Institutions are internalised by group members as identities and selves and are displayed as personalities.** The concept of 'internalisation' denotes the degree to which societal norms, values and behaviours become incorporated into the individual identities of group members such that they are seen to be constitutive of their sense of self. Group members identify with their positions, the practices they enact, and the positions they occupy in a dynamic through which institutional phenomena acquire personal meaning and significance.
  8. **Institutions have a legitimating ideology.** This is the mechanism that sets out the 'rightness' and necessity of institutional arrangements, practices and social relations. A widely held view within sociology is that the legitimating ideology that justifies institutional practices and social relations is created by elites who benefit from the arrangements and practices they valorise (Berger and Luckmann, 1966)
  9. **Institutions may give (or attempt to give) the appearance of internal coherence, but in fact they are inconsistent, contradictory and rife with conflict.** Institutions entail many diverse practices, some of which are in conflict with others. Struggles among group members within institutions over particular practices, norms and values are common, and are one way institutions change.

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10. **Institutions continuously change.** In spite of the common feature of institutions as social forms that endure over time, and their often ‘immutable’ appearance, institutional forms, relations and practices are actually in continual flux. This is, among other things, because (i) current practices in settings that have themselves changed over time modify past practices – sometimes through incremental change but sometimes through massive transformation; (ii), the interdependence of institutions means that changes in one will create ripple effects in others; and (iii) old institutions can ‘die out’. Theories of change in social institutions are almost as diverse and wide-ranging as theories of social institutions themselves (see below)
  11. **Institutions are organised in accord with and permeated by power.** Institutional positions and practices allocate privilege and advantages to incumbents of some social positions and subordination and disadvantages to others. Power differentials are manifest in the recursive practices that constrain and facilitate members’ behaviours.
  12. **Institutions and individuals mutually constitute each other.** It is not possible to conceptualise separate ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ phenomena: individuals are constitutive elements of institutions and at the same time internalise institutional norms and processes.
  13. **Institutions are interdependent.** No institution is totally separate from others; each links to others, often extensively (Roscigno, 2000). This is what adds to the complexity of analysis. For example, of the ‘meta’ institutions, family, polity/state, and economy are all intricately interlinked – in either complementary or contradictory ways, or both. Religion and education are also involved. Assuming that any institution is separate from others will produce flawed analysis (Nisbet, 1953) as well as flawed social policy. This was, for example, one of the major points of the recent UNRISD report on poverty and social development.
  14. **Institutions are often entwined with the state.** The state itself can be considered an institution which, in turns, links into all other institutions, helping to determine both patterns of behaviour and outcomes – through, for example, its policies, legislation, ideological power, police force, allocative powers and regulatory functions. This is why it is important in any analysis of institutions to ‘bring the state back in’.

### 3.3 Perspectives on ‘Institutional’ stability and change

Institutions are normally conceptualised as providing the underpinnings for enduring patterns of organisation and behaviour. Institutional reproduction can occur in at least one of two ways: either because actors either view institutions as being appropriate or legitimate, which forms a basis for making future decisions about what is appropriate by a positive feedback process of increasing legitimation; or actors are constrained in some way to conform to the established norms. Beliefs in the legitimacy of an institution may range from ‘*active moral approval to passive acquiescence in the face of the status quo*’ (Mahoney, 2000 in Kangas and Vestheim, 2010). Institutions can, however, change over time. Institutional transformation may come about by rising inconsistencies between multiple cognitive frameworks that are predominant in society, providing a basis for actors to adopt new subjective evaluations and moral codes concerning appropriateness (Kangas and Vestheim, 2010). Change can also be brought about by shocks or

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transformations from external forces. A number of different perspectives in institutional theory and particularly institutional change are summarised in Box 6.

### Box 5: Perspectives on Institutional change

At least three different perspectives on institutional change and permanence have been identified within institutional theory: rational choice, sociological and historical institutionalism (Hall & Taylor, 1996; Thelen, 1999; 2004).

- According to **rationalist approaches**, institutions are intentionally and deliberately created or changed in order to increase efficiency, and the creation of institutions is understood as a quasi-contractual process marked by voluntary agreement among actors.
- According to **sociological approaches**, permanence or change of institutions is not just a functional response to the demand for economic or technological efficiency; organisations, for example, can adopt whatever practices are considered by their institutional environment as appropriate or legitimate even if these practices do not increase organisational efficiency (taking into account also informal constraints and culturally self-evident world views).
- According to **historical institutionalists**, institutional change occurs in ‘path-dependent’ evolutionary ways reflecting historical cycles. When institutions have been established through various struggles and negotiations among organised groups, they have a continuing effect on subsequent decision-making and institution-building. Path dependence with power relations embedded within existing institutions is an important factor behind the persistence of institutions and policies over time.

Source: From Kangas and Vestheim, 2010

In his review of the impact of institutions on socio-economic development and change, Jutting (2003), argues for the importance of analysis of context-specific dynamics, including the interplay of formal and informal institutions (for example, local land and resource management systems, or informal social security and reciprocity networks): *‘In the development process, the demand for formal institutions increases due to an increasing complexity in transactions that can hardly be efficiently handled by informal institutions. However, this does not mean that informal institutions are becoming useless or losing importance. On the contrary, it is important that any change in the institutional environment takes into account, or even better is build or embedded in, the existing local institutions. This will help to reduce the creation of a parallel system that is usually highly ineffective and involves high costs.’*

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# 4 A focus on adolescence

## 4.1 Characterisation of adolescence

Adolescence as one particularly critical period of transition has been increasingly picked up as a key area of research and analysis from a cross-cultural perspective including strong links to policy-focused research. The anthropological study and analysis of adolescence has taken a variety of forms, with much debate over the years on the relative roles of ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’ in the experience of this transitional phase of life.<sup>7</sup> Mensch et al., (1998) contend that to the extent that anthropologists have studied the transition to adulthood, they have focused primarily on rites of passage at puberty rather than on socialisation into procreative and economically productive roles.<sup>8</sup> Many social scientists have maintained that adolescence as we know it—a period in which children attain physical maturity but are not burdened with adult roles and responsibilities—is an epiphenomenon of modern, industrial societies (Caldwell et al., 1998; Senderowits, 1995). Recently, however, some anthropologists have criticised the historicisation of adolescence, arguing that the stage between childhood dependency and adult autonomy is an inherent developmental phase, which exists in all cultures at all times (and even among other primates). According to this view, adolescence involves a core set of universal issues (albeit in different forms): management of sexuality among unmarried individuals, social organisation and peer group influence among adolescents, and training in occupational and life skills (Schlegel, 1995) (see also Box 6).

### Box 6: US National Research Council recommendations on policies and programmes to support adolescent transitions into adulthood

In the US, a panel of experts was convened by the National Research Council to examine changes in the transition to adulthood in developing countries and their implications for the design of youth policies and programmes, in particular, those affecting adolescent reproductive health (Lloyd, 2005). Drawing on a conceptual framework developed to identify criteria for successful transitions in the context of contemporary global changes (see figure 1 below), the study identified the importance of adequate preparation for key transitions to adult roles, including transitions to **work, citizenship, marriage and parenthood** (which correspond

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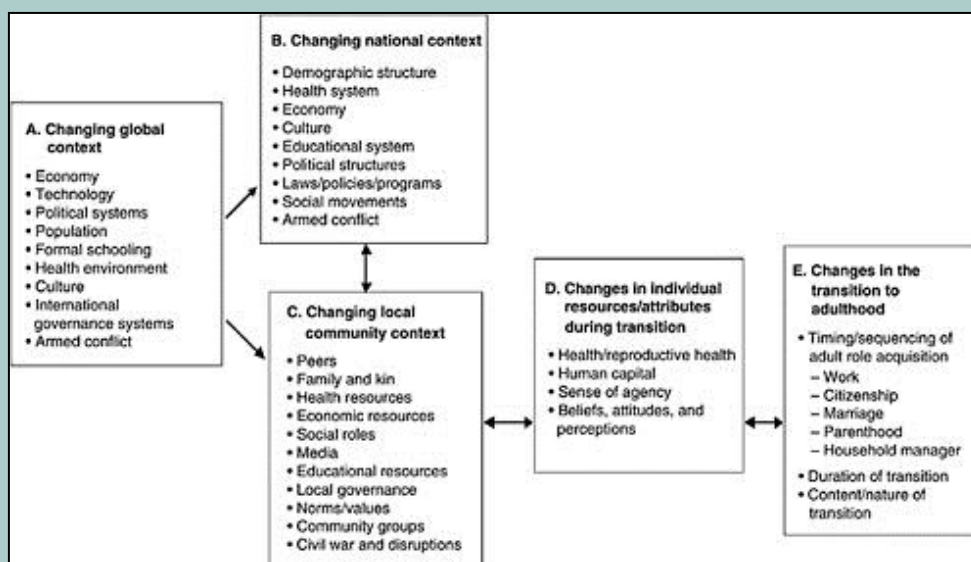
<sup>7</sup> Margaret Mead’s study of *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) was a classic in the ‘culture and personality’ field that intended to show that behaviour in adolescence was caused by cultural conditioning rather than biological changes and, in contrast to the prevailing view of adolescence as a necessarily stressful and disruptive experience (as espoused by Hall 1904) could be experienced in a smooth and harmonious way, depending on the cultural setting. The reinterpretation of Mead’s study by Derek Freeman (1983) continued the debate into the more recent history of anthropology.

<sup>8</sup> Adolescence did not in fact appear in the social science literature until 1904, when G. Stanley Hall published his two-volume work, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion, and Education*. (cited in Mensch et al, 1998)

roughly to the three of the key institutional ‘sites’ identified for analysis in preceding sections, namely the market; the state/community; and the family/household). Key requisites for successful transition were seen to include:

- An appropriate stock of human and social capital to be a productive adult member of society.
- The acquisition of pro-social values and the ability to contribute to the collective well-being as citizen and community participant.
- Adequate preparation for the assumption of adult social roles and obligations, including the roles of spouse or partner, parent, and household and family manager.
- The capability to make choices through the acquisition of a sense of self and a sense of personal competence.
- A sense of well-being.

**Figure 1: A conceptual framework for the study of changing transitions to adulthood in developing countries**



Source: Lloyd, 2005

In the panel’s view, policies that support universal primary schooling of adequate quality, the expansion of good secondary schooling, and the promotion of good health during this phase of the life cycle are essential in their own right but also important because of their role in promoting success in the other domains. To counter systematic gender differences in pathways to adulthood recommendations focused on the promotion of equitable treatment in the classroom through gender training for teachers and school administrators, the development of compensatory educational and training programs for disadvantaged and out of school youth, particularly girls, and the adoption of policies and programmes that support delays in marriage. It was also noted that addressing gender problems in society would call for interventions that affect all social classes and that give as much attention to boys’ attitudes and behaviors as to girls’. In terms of knowledge gaps and

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directions for future research, it was noted that *‘Much more is known about basic patterns and trends than about the determinants or the consequences of these trends or about the extensive variability among young people in developing countries’* (Lloyd, 2005).

The gendered nature of adolescence and the full experience of adolescence for girls have been particularly neglected areas of research. In an early effort to redress this problem and to analyse the ‘uncharted passage’ of girls’ adolescence in the developing world, Barbara Mensch et al. (1998) point out that even the language for this phase of life is gender neutral, as children differentiated as boys and girls become suddenly lumped together as ‘adolescents’, not to emerge as gender-differentiated beings again until they become men and women. In a recent review of the literature on adolescence, Donahue (2009) concurs that *‘Gender analyses focus on adult women, while children and youth are constructed mostly as gender neutral. Adolescent girls are therefore largely absent as a specific category with their own concerns, experiences and potential for contribution’*. As a result the lack of importance placed on them (reflected in their lack of visibility in language) *‘Girls disappear as policy subjects after receiving their last childhood immunisation and do not reappear until they are pregnant and, in most cases, married.’* (Mensch et al., 1998).

The absence of research on the full gendered experiences of adolescent girls is curious because, as Mensch et al. (1998) note that *‘adolescence is precisely when gender role differentiation intensifies. Girls and boys in cultures throughout the world are treated differently from birth onward (and even antenatally where selective abortion of female fetuses is practiced), but at puberty this gender divide widens. During adolescence, the world expands for boys and contracts for girls. Boys enjoy new privileges reserved for men; girls endure new restrictions reserved for women. Boys gain autonomy, mobility, opportunity, and power (including power over girls’ sexual and reproductive lives); girls are systematically deprived of these assets.’*

## 4.2 Policy focus on adolescence

Much of the recent policy-oriented research interest seems to have focused in on a narrow subset of issues relevant to adolescence and adult transitions. One strand is that dominated by public health concerns about ‘risky sexual behaviours’ facilitating the transmission of HIV and AIDS and STDs or early pregnancy leading to higher risks of maternal and infant mortality (along with other public health concerns about risky behaviours linked to substance abuse and accidents). Additional concerns about unemployed young people and security issues, including state security and social cohesion, have also been voiced and identified, but until recently, do not seem to have given rise to the same intensity of policy attention.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Barbara Mensch et al (1998) point rather early on to a number of authors identifying unemployed youth as security risks: Because of their large and growing numbers and their disproportionate representation among rural-to-urban migrants (Oucho and Gould 1993), adolescents are perceived as a security risk. Some analysts argue that masses of unemployed, on-the-move youth (i.e., adolescent males) pose a threat to civil society (Kennedy 1993). The Central Intelligence Agency Task Force on State Failure included a ‘youth bulge variable’ (the ratio of 15–24-year-olds to 30–55-year-olds) in their quantitative model predicting political stability. This variable was one of three out of 75 that best predicted a state failure involving communal conflict (Esty et al. 1995).



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In the case of policies pertaining to the gendered experiences of adolescence, Mensch et al. (1998) note that adolescent policy and programmes must *‘peel away the many layers of control over girls, challenge discriminatory familial and community norms, and confront male attitudes and behaviors that are damaging to girls’*; in doing so, they must also *‘invent’ a value for girls by counteracting customary perceptions of girls (and the legal frameworks that often support them) and by promoting the ‘novel’ concept of girls’ rights and capabilities apart from reproduction’*. They suggest a research agenda on gender and adolescence with a focus on girls that, while maintaining a critical focus on reproductive health, would expand beyond into the social and economic domains as well, arguing that *‘girls’ social and economic disadvantages have many direct and indirect effects on their reproductive behavior and health [...]. Furthermore, their wellbeing is crucial to the social cohesiveness and economic productivity of their societies... Their experience during the critical second decade of their lives shapes their future and, by extension, the future of the societies in which they live’* (ibid.). Accordingly, Mensch et al. (1988) have argued that public policy must set an agenda for adolescent girls that is organised around the distinctive features of their lives: their risk of exploitative living arrangements; confinement to domestic roles and responsibilities; restricted mobility; inadequate and occasionally threatening school experience; unacknowledged work needs and compromising work situations; pressure to marry and begin childbearing early; and limited control over, and knowledge about, their reproductive health and fertility, even perhaps especially) in the case of married girls. Four main policy challenges are as follows:

1. Create a safe, supported passage for girls from ages 10 to 19, recognising that the second decade of their lives is a period of critical capability-building and heightened vulnerability, which does not end with marriage and childbearing.
2. Acknowledge that adolescent girls’ lives are often governed by harmful, culturally sanctioned gender rules imposed by males, parents, and other elders and perpetuated at times by girls themselves.
3. Expand girls’ social participation, schooling, and economic opportunities, understanding that these are basic entitlements and that they frame girls’ reproductive behaviour.
4. Recognise that a large proportion of adolescent girls are already wives and mothers, who need support and investment at least as much as do their unmarried female peers.

### 4.3 Current initiatives and limitations

Internationally, the agenda for adolescent girls has recently received renewed emphasis, bolstered by policy-focused research demonstrating the clear value of investing in girls at this age. A number of initiatives are currently underway to both enhance the visibility of adolescent girls in policy debates and to stimulate development approaches tailored to their needs.<sup>10</sup> Programme and policy work on girls’ education, initially focused on primary levels, has extended to the secondary level where girls are seen to be particularly disadvantaged as gender norms linked to increasingly restricted mobility or early marriage set in (see for example AED, 2006). Programmes on livelihoods and preparation for employment—including

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<sup>10</sup> Many of these have been identified in the CPRC report on *Stemming girls’ chronic poverty* (2010) along with examples of particularly promising policy and programme initiatives.

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through expanded access to financial services have also been increasingly focusing on adolescent girls, and efforts to stem gender-based violence of all sorts, such as rape, dowry deaths, poverty-induced ‘sugar daddy’ arrangements, and FGM, etc.—have highlighted the particular vulnerability of adolescent girls. Work on economic empowerment of girls is being supported through initiatives such as the World Bank’s Adolescent Girls’ Initiatives and the partnership between the UN Foundation and Nike, among others. And reproductive health efforts, such as those led by UNFPA, are increasingly seeking to address issues of gender inequality in a comprehensive manner.

The UN system, in a joint statement aimed at advancing key policies and programmes to empower the hardest-to-reach adolescent girls, particularly those aged 10-14, identified five strategic priorities that highlight issues that would need to be taken into consideration in policy-oriented research on gender and adolescence (Box 7).

### Box 7: Accelerating efforts to advance the rights of adolescent girls

- **Educate adolescent girls:** Ensure adolescent girls have access to quality education and complete schooling, focusing on their transition from primary to post-primary education and training, including secondary education, and pathways between the formal and non-formal systems
- **Improve adolescent girls’ health:** Ensure adolescent girls ‘ access to age-appropriate health and nutrition information and services, including life-skills based sexuality education, HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health
- **Keep adolescent girls free from violence:** Prevent and protect girls from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation, and ensure that girls who experience violence receive prompt protection, services and access to justice
- **Promote adolescent girl leaders:** Ensure that adolescent girls gain essential economic and social skills and are supported by mentors and resources to participate in community life
- **Count adolescent girls:** Work with partners to collect, analyse and use data on adolescent girls to advocate for, develop and monitor evidence-based policies and programmes that advance their well-being and realise their human rights.

UN Joint Statement (ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO)

Still, challenges remain, and it is not clear that a coherent and comprehensive analytical framework is consistently employed to tie all of these initiatives together and link them to the broader life cycle and ‘social institutional’ context as this is played out in particular settings. Nor is it clear that adolescent girls’ connections to broader social forces are either recognised or addressed in consistent manner. One recent review (Donahue, 2009) seeking to broaden the development perspectives of adolescent girls through an analysis of literature on four key issues (demographic transition, economic crises, climate change and the spread of technology) identified clear gaps in the literature, including:

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- The absence of adolescent girls as a specific category comprised of multiple subsets (by age, marital status, education, urban or rural residence, socio-economic status, etc.);
  - The lack of data and empirical studies of adolescent girls relevant to the development issues reviewed here;
  - The paucity of studies that seek to understand forms of exclusion and discrimination experienced by adolescent girls at different stages in their lives; and
  - The lack of rigorous assessments of programs and policy strategies for their empowerment and inclusion.

As the review concluded, ‘These are very basic gaps in knowledge that limit the possibility of meaningful debate and discussion.’

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# 5 Enhancing outcomes for girls

In identifying discriminatory social institutions and the laws, norms and practices which deny girls the ability to reach their full potential, we are seeking to understand how this potential is both constructed and limited. We suggest two key analytical threads and policy perspectives to enhance our understanding: capabilities and entitlements. Combined these offer a powerful approach for both analysing and acting upon systemic gender inequalities.

## 5.1 The capabilities approach and social exclusion

The ‘capabilities approach’ to human development has arisen over the last decade or so as a leading alternative to standard economic frameworks for thinking about human development, poverty, inequality and social justice. It emerged out of Amartya Sen’s (1999) theory of ‘development as freedom’ and has been further elaborated and refined by others. This approach posits development as a process of expanding ‘freedoms’ or ‘capabilities’ that improves human lives by expanding the range of things that a person can effectively be and do, such as to be healthy and well nourished, to be knowledgeable, and to participate in community life. Development from this perspective is about facilitating the acquisition and use of such capabilities as well as removing obstacles to what a person can do in life (obstacles such as illiteracy, ill health, lack of access to resources, or lack of civil and political freedom.) (Fukido Parr, 2003).

Sen (1999) himself did not define the precise content of capabilities, but instead identified certain ‘instrumental freedoms’ including **economic opportunities, political freedoms, social facilities, transparency guarantees, and protective security**, noting that societal arrangements for these involve engagement and interactions among many institutions (for example, state, market, legal system, political parties, the media, public interest groups, etc.) which can be assessed in terms of their contribution to enhancing and guaranteeing the substantive freedoms of individuals, seen as active agents of change rather than as passive recipients of dispensed benefits.

The capabilities approach influenced the multi-dimensional human development paradigm set out from 1990 onwards by the United Nations where it has influenced both the assessment and the practice of development (Fukido-Parr, 2003). It has evolved over time as a broad normative framework for the evaluation of individual well-being and social arrangements, the design of policies and proposals about social change in society, offering a comprehensive approach to efforts to enhance human well-being. For some of the capabilities in question, the main input will be financial resources and economic production, but for others it may be political practices, such as the effective guaranteeing and protection of freedom of thought, religion or political participation, or social or cultural practices, social structures,

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social institutions, public goods, social norms, traditions and habits. The capabilities approach thus covers the full terrain of human wellbeing and the social arrangements that either foster or inhibit it.<sup>11</sup>

According to Fukuda-Parr (2003), the capabilities-based human development paradigm provides a more gender-sensitive agenda to public policy than its alternatives since:

- Gender equity is a central concern of the approach, which emphasises the importance of expanding the capabilities and functionings of all individuals. The fact that discrimination continues to be widespread is a priority concern.
- It is sensitive to a range of inequities and discrimination that are particularly important in women's lives, but are unrelated to incomes and economic growth, such as lack of autonomy in decisions about their lives and the ability to influence decision-making within the family, community, and nation.
- It has the scope to delve into complex issues, such as the unequal sharing of unpaid work, that constrain women's life choices. Moreover, given the constraints on women's agency in almost all societies by political institutions such as male-dominated political parties, social institutions such as the family, and social norms such as women's responsibilities for care work, these issues and their underlying causes clearly must be tackled head on.

Through the work of feminist thinkers such as Martha Nussbaum, the capabilities approach has been used as a potent tool for construction of a normative concept of social justice and in particular the promotion of 'gender justice'. In an attempt to give further substance to Sen's ideas, Nussbaum (2000; 2003; 2011) developed a list of 10 central human capabilities which she identifies as essential aspects of life (See Box 8). While some of these categories may be seen to be of more direct and operational relevance than others, they nevertheless provide a useful starting point for further reflection on their application to the analysis of the human development outcomes and potential of adolescent girls in different contexts.<sup>12</sup>

### Box 8: Key 'capabilities' identified by Nussbaum

1. *Life*. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2. *Bodily Health*. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
3. *Bodily Integrity*. Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
4. *Senses, Imagination, and Thought*. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason—and to do these things in a 'truly human' way, a way

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.capabilityapproach.com/pubs/323CAtraining20031209.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Other analysts have suggested other content and categorization of capabilities which might also be useful to keep in consideration (Alkire, 2008), and more recent formulations by Nussbaum of capabilities promoted by the human development paradigm in 2011).

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informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.

5. *Emotions*. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)
6. *Practical Reason*. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)
7. *Affiliation*.
  - Being able to live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other humans, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.)
  - Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin and species.
8. *Other Species*. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
9. *Play*. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
10. *Control over one's Environment*.

Source: Nussbaum (2003)

As noted before, recent advances in the conceptualisation and measurement of multidimensional poverty from a human development perspective have emerged in part from the human capability approach, where both poverty and development are defined and measured against the extent of freedoms that a person possesses. According to the capability approach, therefore, development should be considered a process of expanding freedoms or removing the major sources of unfreedom rather than a focus on narrower measurements such as growth of gross national product, per capita income, or industrialisation.<sup>13</sup>

*At its base, the capability approach is a normative framework for assessing alternative policies or states of affairs or options – whether in welfare economics, development, or poverty reduction. The capability approach proposes that social arrangements should be primarily evaluated according*

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Nussbaum (2011) *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* for one of the most recent expressions of this line of thinking.

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*to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve plural functionings they value. It follows that the capability approach views poverty as a deprivation of these valuable freedoms and evaluates multidimensional poverty in the space of capabilities (Alkire, 2008).*

Such an approach could also usefully draw on notions of different forms of ‘capital’ that are needed to support expanding capabilities. The notion of multiple forms of capital was first brought to the fore in *The Forms of Capital* by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and further elaborated into four types:

- **Economic capital:** Command over economic resources (*cash* and other *assets*). This form of capital would have most relevance to adolescent girls’ asset base, as explored through SIGI and the Chronic poverty adaptation, including assets obtained (or not) through inheritance and dowry; issues of land ownership and control over natural resources; productive employment and means of livelihood, etc.
- **Social capital:** Resources based on group membership, relationships, networks of influence and support. Bourdieu described social capital as ‘*the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.*’ The commonalities of most definitions of social capital are that they focus on social relations that have productive benefits. The variety of definitions identified in the literature stem from the highly context specific nature of social capital and the complexity of its conceptualisation and operationalisation. For gender analysis generally, and particularly for adolescent girls, this could provide a critical entry point into the analysis of both the potential and limits of women’s ability to build up social capital through kin networks (through their roles as mothers, sisters, wives, etc) and affiliation, marriage structures, female solidarity groups, community associations and the like, as well as to examine their uneven insertion into the wider institutions of public life.
- **Cultural capital:** Forms of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person has, which give them a higher status in society. Parents provide their children with cultural capital by transmitting the attitudes and knowledge needed to succeed in the current educational system. For the analysis of adolescent girls, this links directly into gendered patterns of access to education, professional training and technical skills, as well as life skills including reproductive health information, that prepare them to assume their roles as adults.
- **Symbolic capital:** Resources available to an individual on the basis of honour, prestige or recognition that functions as an authoritative embodiment of cultural value. A war hero, for example, may have symbolic capital in the context of running for political office. For gender analysis, this notion could be explored through examination of different notions of honour and prestige for males and females in a given society, which would open the door, among other things, to exploration of the ‘honour and shame’ complex which lodges male honour in control over females. It would also entail analysis of the potential forms of symbolic value for women that may be attached to particular statuses, for example, as the mother of sons, or as a member of a ruling family, as a successful professional woman in her own right, or as a ‘wise woman’ who has a distinctive role in some cultures.

Other (subsidiary) distinctions in kinds of capital have also been suggested: Physical capital (any already-manufactured asset that is applied in production, such as machinery, buildings, or vehicles; in classical economics it is one of three factors of production, the other two being natural resources, including land and labour); human capital (a result of investment in the human agent; the stock of competencies, knowledge and personality attributes embodied in the ability to perform labour so as to produce economic value - attributes gained by a worker through education and experience) and financial capital (money).

## 5.2 Capabilities approach and adolescent girls

Further literature review and consultations would be needed to identify how and if the capabilities approach may already have been applied to the analysis of adolescent girls and with what results. Here we discuss several examples identified during our scoping literature review.

First, a capabilities approach linked to different forms of capital has been applied to adolescent girls programming around livelihoods (Sebstad, 2008). With explicit reference to Sen's definition of capabilities as the ability to do, act, and be, the approach explores the kinds of assets girls need to build up through a combination of knowledge and experience to expand their capacities. (For example: financial education on savings combined with the opportunity to practice savings to build up financial capability, or rights awareness combined with enforcement/rule of law to obtain freedom from violence, as one of the most elemental 'capabilities' linked to life itself.) A broad form of 'human assets' is also suggested, linked not only to social capital in the form of skills and knowledge, but also to good health; the ability to work; self esteem; bargaining power; autonomy; and control over decisions – all 'assets' that are critical to explore in the case of adolescent girls. Application of such an approach leads to the identification of a variety of programme strategies and interventions aimed at building assets both to reduce vulnerability and to expanding opportunities, as summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Assets and adolescent program activities**

<i>Asset</i>	<i>Examples of Adolescent Program Activities</i>
Social	Group formation, safe spaces and social support, networks, mentoring
Human	Life skills training, health education, literacy programs, financial education, rights education, vocational training, business skills training, employability training
Financial	Savings, credit, other financial services
Physical	Safe physical space to meet; safe working space, access to transport, tools and equipment for businesses

Source: Sebstad, 2008

Plan International's (2009) *Because I am a Girl Report* focusing on girls in the global economy also identified four kinds of assets or 'capital' needed during the early years for girls to be able to progress towards economic empowerment:



- **A legal identity:** Girls need formal proof of their identity, a birth certificate which enables them to be counted and to access credit, start a business or compete for a job in the future
- **Human capital:** Girls need time and space to be children so that they can grow, learn and develop skills
- **Social capital:** Girls need friendships and mentors and the freedom to build these social networks
- **Material capital:** Girls need to be seen as future economic actors who are entitled to property, assets and land.

In relation to children, both Save the Children and UNICEF have developed approaches to the assessment of child poverty from a capabilities approach: Save the Children through the construction of a Child Development Index that combines performance measures specific to children – primary education, child health, and child nutrition; and UNICEF in its application of a multi-dimensional assessment of child poverty defined as a set of ‘deprivations’.<sup>14</sup>

The OECD (2007) also sets out a quite comprehensive capability framework for analysis of the degree to which interventions enhance capabilities that will enable individuals or groups to alleviate and overcome poverty (See Box 9). The capabilities are seen to be closely interlinked and embrace both socio-economic capabilities and human rights and political freedoms, all of which are seen to affect an individual or household’s degree of vulnerability and social inclusion/exclusion. Gender equity and environmental sustainability are seen to cut across all of the dimensions.

### Box 9: OECD capability framework

- **Economic:** The ability to have and use assets to pursue sustainable livelihoods, to provide income to finance consumption and savings.
- **Human:** The health, education, nutrition, clean water and shelter, necessary to engage effectively in ones society, not only to make a living, but also to be part of the wider society.
- **Political:** Human rights, having a voice and some authority to influence public policies and political priorities, and be adequately represented within ones community at local and national levels.
- **Socio-cultural:** The rights and abilities to be included and participate as a valued member within social and cultural relationships, networks and activities.
- **Protective-security** All the issues that help to lessen vulnerability, such as protection from threat to person and property (including unfair treatment by the state), the ability to withstand economic shocks; formal or informal forms of insurance.

Source: OECD (2001).

20 Information on the formulation and application of Save the Children’s Child Development Index can be found at: <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/what-we-do/the-child-development-index>. Information on the definitions, methodologies and country reports of the UNICEF-supported global study on child poverty and disparities can be found at: <http://www.unicefglobalstudy.blogspot.com/>

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The concept of capabilities as embracing socio-cultural entitlements to inclusion and participation has been applied to notions of poverty as ‘social exclusion,’ defined as a combination of deprivations that stem from reduced capacities or ‘functionings’. This has contributed to the multi-dimensional definition of poverty, with important implications as well for understanding and assessing gender inequalities (Sen, 2000).

### 5.3 Gender justice and entitlements

An *entitlements* approach is informed by a rights perspective and considers the range of key economic, socio-cultural and political entitlements fundamental to a transformative approach to development and the achievement of social justice. The evolving notion of ‘gender justice’ may be one way of combining the capabilities approach and rights-based approaches for adolescent girls around issues of their social, economic, political and individual ‘entitlements’ and the measures needed to ensure that such entitlements may be claimed and activated in practice. Mukhopadhy (2007) signals the rise of the concept of ‘gender justice’ as a turning away from the ‘mainstreaming gender in development approach that has lost credibility as a strategy for change. *‘The language of justice, rights and citizenship is being brought back. It foregrounds the reality of power relations, reminds us of the political nature of the project, and draws attention to the sites where struggles for equality are being waged.’* Goetz (2007) traces the lineage of the concept and outlines three definitions and paradigms:

- **Gender justice as entitlements and choice – the enabling paradigm:** As seen above, this approach has roots in liberal feminist political philosophy, as exemplified in the writings of Nussbaum, drawing on and adapting Sen’s capabilities approach.
- **Gender justice as absence of discrimination:** The most formalised attempt to establish principles of gender justice is found in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which makes the absence of gender-based discrimination the indicator of gender justice.
- **Gender justice as positive rights and entitlements:** This is based on an understanding of the relationship between the articulation of individual and collective preferences (‘voice’) and power relationships within the broader institutional, social and political setting. This perspective calls for appropriate state responses to enable people to make the most of their basic endowments in resources and skills, recognising that social, economic and political institutions must be made accountable to women as part of a project that involves rooting out ‘institutionalised patriarchal power systems’.

The state's role as a guarantor of rights involves: (i) an obligation to respect (the state's duty not to interfere); (ii) an obligation to protect (setting safety standards or protecting property); and (iii) an obligation to fulfil (positive action in identifying vulnerable groups and facilitating their access to resources. This is particularly important for disadvantaged groups, including women and, we would add, girls (Goetz 2007).

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A definition of gender justice and a practical conceptualisation that builds on rights-based approaches and can be promoted to support enhanced capabilities has been articulated as follows:

*'Gender justice can be defined as the ending of—and if necessary the provision of redress for—inequalities between women and men that result in women's subordination to men. These inequalities may be in the distribution of resources and opportunities that enable individuals to build human, social, economic, and political capital. Or, they may be in the conceptions of human dignity, personal autonomy and rights that deny women physical integrity and the capacity to make choices about how to live their lives. As an outcome, gender justice implies access to and control over resources, combined with agency. In this sense it does not differ from many definitions of 'women's empowerment.' But gender justice as a process brings an additional essential element: accountability. Gender justice requires that women are able to ensure that power-holders—whether in the household, the community, the market, or the state—can be held to account so that actions that limit, on the grounds of gender, women's access to resources or capacity to make choices, are prevented or punished. The term 'women's empowerment' is often used interchangeably with 'gender justice', but gender justice adds an element of redress and restitution that is not always present in discussions of women's empowerment' (Goetz, 2007)*

In expanding such a concept to embrace gender justice as the basis for promotion of capacity-enhancement for adolescent girls, the way is paved for consideration of adolescent girls as citizens with rights and entitlements which need to be accorded and claimed through an enabling environment structured within the larger social units of which they are a part. As child rights specialist Goonesekere (1997) has pointed out, *'Realising the rights agenda of adolescent girls thus requires an effort to realise their civil and political rights, as well as critical social and economic rights, and effective advocacy at the national and international level'* including around efforts to promote 'gender justice'.

While strengthening capabilities in various domains is critical for human development as a whole, eliminating gender discrimination in the evolution and exercise of such capabilities is essential for gender justice in particular. For this reason, it is important to conceptualise adolescent girls as evolving citizens to whom rights and entitlements accrue and to consider, therefore, the full range of actors at various levels – including family, community and state – who bear responsibility for creating the enabling environment and providing the services required to nurture and enhance these capabilities.

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# 6 Enhancing adolescent girls' capabilities by addressing discriminatory social institutions: an analytical framework

## 6.1 Capabilities and entitlements needed to overcome discriminatory practices and non-actions

Integrating capabilities with both entitlements and rights provides a useful analytical entry point and contributes to the development of a conceptual framework linked to gender justice that helps guide research into and policy action regarding the various dimensions of social institutions, including organisational forms, values and practices that either foster or inhibit the development of girls' evolving capacities and potential. Such an approach has the additional advantage of linking both 'being' and 'becoming' along a continuum that posits Sen's 'development as freedom' as means as well as end. As Table 1 illustrates, the framework also leads to specific actions which enhance entitlements and capabilities. Drawing on the literature discussed above, the framework identifies 6 capability domains for attention: political, human capital, productive, socio-cultural, physical/bodily and reproductive.

**Table 2: Adolescent Girls' Capabilities and Entitlements Framework**

Capability domains	Norms and practices compromising capabilities and leading to exclusion	Non-actions compromising capabilities and compounding exclusion	Entitlements that underpin gender justice
Political	Control/surveillance Restricted mobility Limit on public roles Limit on private roles Limited authority in family Limit on public roles (caste)	Non-provision of information Non-provision of justice services	Voice/representation Group membership Association Mobility
Educational	Gender and identity-based school exclusion based on son bias Unequal care burdens Lack of choice over time use Bullying in school or community	Non-provision of education services Non-provision of quality child care Non-enforcement of decent work conditions or child work laws Non-provision of reproductive health services	Education Healthcare Leisure time Decent work
Economic/productive	Limited access to assets Unequal inheritance and	Non equality in inheritance law Weak	Income-generating opportunities, skills, training Productive assets -

Capability domains	Norms and practices compromising capabilities and leading to exclusion	Non-actions compromising capabilities and compounding exclusion	Entitlements that underpin gender justice
	property rights Transfer and control of dowry Exclusion from labour markets and decent work Occupational discrimination – Hereditary employment Effect of child labour – Exclusion from schooling	implementation Non-enforcement of labour law Gender discrimination in equal opportunities Non-implementation of children act on labour Weak access to justice	land, credit, technology
Socio-cultural	Restricted mobility Segregation Limit on public roles Limit on private roles	Limited information	inclusion in group/community identity, respect, status
Physical/bodily	Unequal quality and provision of care (son bias) Limited authority in family Early marriage Limited control over physical body (safety) Gender-based violence Harmful traditional practices	Limited safe spaces Limited protective services Limited access to justice Non-provision of health services Non-provision of reproductive health services Non-enforcement	Bodily integrity care and protection

Capability domains	Norms and practices compromising capabilities and leading to exclusion	Non-actions compromising capabilities and compounding exclusion	Entitlements that underpin gender justice
		of national laws	
Reproductive	Limited control over fertility Limited control over sexuality Early marriage Polygamy Limited authority in family Infanticide Limited control over fertility Unequal quality and Provision of care Unequal care burdens Lack of choice over time use	Non-provision of childcare Non-provision of reproductive health services Non-enforcement of laws	Decision-making power in hh Balance of time v-a-v care/domestic/productive Work and leisure

In seeking to understand how the development of capabilities are restricted and how discrimination functions we need to go beyond a recognition of the compromised capabilities themselves, to also understand the forces driving discriminatory laws, norms and practices. Accordingly, this framework is underpinned by thinking about the intimate linkages between discriminatory norms practices and group perceptions of social identity, themselves driven by collectively agreed upon understandings and belief systems surrounding group membership (such as gender, age, class, ethnicity, religion), and related systems of power relations (whether it be patriarchy, age-based hierarchies, capitalist modes of production, etc.). The resulting norms, values and attitudes can have positive, neutral or negative effects; in their negative form, they can be discriminatory in nature. This discrimination results in exclusion and restricted opportunities to develop capabilities, the outcomes of which are limited potential, restricted development and disempowerment, and a lack of social justice and in particular what we and others term ‘gender justice’ as our outcome (see Figure 2 below).

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## 6.2 Policy and practice implications

We intend to situate our analysis first within a context specific analysis of adolescence and the enabling or disabling environment, in order to understand in-depth the localised laws, norms and practices, and thus the most appropriate set of policy and practice actions to enable positive change and gender justice for girls. In the second phase of our research, in identifying policy and practice actions around girls' social exclusion and barriers to the realisation of their full human capabilities and entitlements, it will be important to: (i) analyse distinct types of exclusions (including those based on gender) and the different ways in which they can impoverish human lives; (ii) take into consideration the forces of change, both internal and external; (iii) study the links between exclusions in different spheres of life (both 'public' and 'private') involving both overlap and causal linkages; and (iv) investigate other intersecting types of deprivation (including those associated with unfavourable inclusion). In this way, we believe that will be possible to develop more context-sensitive and tailored policy and programme interventions with the ultimate goal of promoting gender justice.



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# 7 Conclusions and next steps

Our aim in the programme overall is to uncover the pivotal role played by discriminatory social institutions in depriving girls and young women of the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Our premise is that discriminatory social institutions play a far more important role in limiting girls potential than is generally understood. The **goal** of the work is to improve development outcomes for *girls and young women* (with a focus on the poorest and hardest to reach from a policy perspective), breaking inter-generational poverty, and providing a catalyst for change, the returns of which will ripple through wider society. The **purpose** of the work programme is to enhance the effectiveness of global efforts to reduce the alarming numbers of desperately deprived girls and young women and improve their wellbeing and capabilities by addressing discriminatory formal and informal laws, norms and practices. The theory of change underpinning our programme posits that the empowerment of girls and young women will in turn catalyse change for communities, broader society and the economy.

Our initial analysis was based on the innovative approach of the SIGI index but with important modifications to the framework they had utilised. We thus identified significant conceptual issues related to indicators of gendered discriminatory social institutions as detailed above. Furthermore our analysis of the usage of the term institutions has highlighted a lack of conceptual clarity among development actors. We have also noted that while feminist scholars have strengthened analytical approaches to gendered institutions, there has, until recently, been a dearth of analysis surrounding adolescence, with some notable exceptions.

Our inception phase scoping work therefore leads us to modify some elements of the conceptual framework and the work programme as we have outlined in detail above. In sum, however, the central premise regarding discriminatory laws, norms and practices remains as an important core element of the analysis. As noted earlier, the term 'social institution' is potentially confusing for policy makers and a range of practitioners and disciplinary experts. Whilst we will not immediately drop the term, we will focus on the discriminatory laws, norms, practices and non-actions which are intrinsic to the social institutions and meanwhile continue to investigate a clear and useful definition of the institutional approach and seek to understand its efficacy in relation to research settings. Placing laws, norms, practices and non-actions at the centre of our analysis means that we will broaden our potential avenues for investigation, before narrowing them again according to particular cultural contexts. This will not negate our attempt to also provide more generalisable policy lessons.

In order to understand the cause and effect of these negative outcomes we have constructed a capabilities framework operating across six dominant domains aspects of which will be investigated according to local context and our understanding of adolescence within those contexts. Our ongoing analysis will consider a general mapping of literature regarding adolescent girls globally, with a

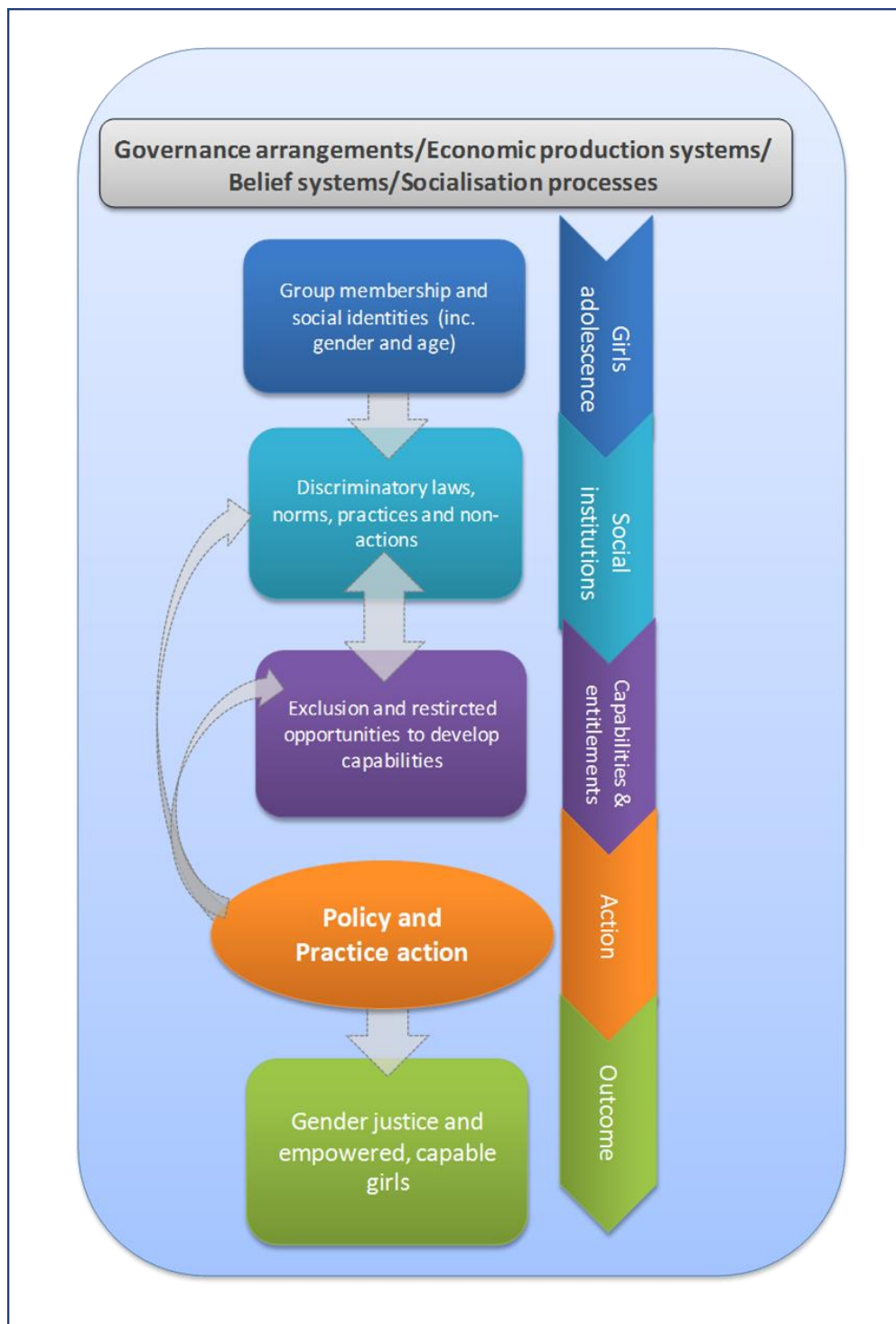
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specific focus on the regions in which our four countries are situated. The literature review will involve mapping international, grey, and secondary sources that might shed light on key regional patterns and/or priorities around adolescent girls focusing particularly on the following key domains: bodily integrity, political/civic, human capital, productive and reproductive capabilities, with a view to furthering an understanding of the extent to which gender justice for adolescent girls is shaped by formal and informal laws, norms, attitudes and practices that might limit them in attaining their capital, exercising their capabilities and claiming their entitlements.

Secondly, the country partners will carry out a country-focused review of adolescent girls and the role that discriminatory social institutions play in hindering the realisation of gender justice in these particular contexts. The country team review process is also an important part of the capacity-building process, as well as a means of developing contextual knowledge and shared understanding of some of the key terminology that will be used throughout the project.

Combined, this exercise will form an integral part of building the knowledge base on the key issues to be investigated, as well as to gain an initial understanding of the mechanisms, programmes and types of evidence that are likely to be found during the systematic review process. An analysis plan will then be developed outlining the scope of material to be investigated, as well as a mapping of potential pathways of influence and/or change, and draft methodologies. This will, in turn, inform the development of the scope and focus of the systematic review.

**Figure 2: Conceptual Framework**



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# Annexes

## Annex 1. Evidence<sup>15</sup> - catalysing change by investing in girls and young women

Today's girls will be half of tomorrow's adults, but investing in them offers returns that will go to all of humanity. The second MDG calls for achieving universal primary education by 2015. On a global level, tremendous progress has been made towards this. Nearly 90 percent of the world's children are enrolled in primary school (UN, 2010). However, this global trend hides alarming disparities, both economic and gendered. The children most likely to be out of school are those most likely to live in the poorest regions of the world. South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa; in these regions, girls have even more limited access to education than boys (Lloyd and Young, 2009). The poorest girls are 3.5 times more likely to be out of school than the wealthiest girls, and the ratio grows in comparison with boys, reaching 4:1 (UN, 2010). The laudable progress towards MDG 2 also fails to address the fact that gender differences in secondary education remain large (Tembon and Fort, 2008) and are even growing in the case of some sub-Saharan African countries (UN, 2008). This is particularly problematic given that public investments in girls' secondary education are both higher than investments in their primary education and higher than investments in boys' secondary education (Levine et al., 2009; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2004).

Educating girls postpones marriage; reduces the risk of HIV/AIDS; increases family income; lowers eventual fertility; improves survival rates, health indicators and educational outcomes for future children; increases women's power in the household and political arenas; and lowers rates of domestic violence (Grown, 2005; Lloyd and Young, 2009; Plan International, 2009; Tembon and Fort, 2008). These returns trickle down to far more than individual women and their families. Communities with educated, empowered women are healthier, have more educational options and are less poor (Levine et al., 2009; Lloyd and Young, 2009; UNESCO, 2000; World Bank, 2006). For example, Benefo (2009) found in Ghana that the percentage of educated women in a community directly impacted fertility choices for the village; Kravdal (2004) found strong community-level effects of women's education on child mortality in India. Furthermore, countries with educated, empowered women have stronger economic growth and higher gross national product (GNP) (Dollar and Gatti, 1999; Patrinos, 2008; Plan International, 2008). Klasen and Lammana (2009) found that gender gaps in South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa cost those regions up to 1.7 percent growth compared with Asia. The return on investment in girls offers a double dividend. Girls who continue their education into the secondary years tend to delay both marriage and sexual initiation (Lloyd and Young, 2009; Mathur et al., 2003; Morrison and Sabarwal, 2008). In one study, it was found that young women with ten years of education were likely to marry up to six years later than their peers without schooling (Martin, 1995). Women with a secondary education have also been found to be three times less likely to be HIV positive (De Walque, 2004). Girls who stay

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15 Drawn from our report: Stemming girls chronic poverty, 2010, Chronic Poverty Research Centre

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in school and delay marriage also have a lower lifetime fertility rate (Lloyd and Young, 2009; Morrison and Sabarwal, 2008).

On average, each year of female schooling has been found to increase the use of contraceptives and lower fertility by 10 percent (UNICEF, 2006). Comparing women in developing countries with more than seven years of education with those with less than three years, this translates into two or three fewer children per family (Plan International, 2009).

This lower fertility rate then cascades into multiple health advantages for women and their children. Delayed, less frequent pregnancy not only reduces maternal mortality, it also improves child survival rates (Lloyd and Young, 2009; Temin et al., 2010). One large, cross-national study found that doubling the proportion of girls who completed secondary school (from 19 to 38 percent) would have cut infant mortality rates from 81 per 1,000 to 38 (Subbarao and Rainey, 1995). Women with education are twice as likely to immunise their children and far less likely to participate in FGM/C (Plan International, 2009). Their children are also less likely to be stunted, underweight or anaemic (Herz and Sperling, 2004; Rihani, 2006; UN Millennium Project, 2005; World Bank, 2006). Moreover, an estimated nearly 45 percent of the global decline in child malnutrition seen between 1970 and 1995 can be attributed to higher productivity directly related to female education (IFPRI, 1999).

Educating girls also has a myriad of non-health advantages for their future families. More education translates into higher rates of employment with commensurately higher wages (Dollar and Gatti, 1999; Lloyd and Young, 2009). Each extra year of education for a girl has been found to increase her income by 10 to 20 percent, with the completion of secondary school returning up to 25 percent (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2004; Schultz, 2002). Since women reinvest 90 percent of their incomes back into the household, compared with men's 30 to 40 percent, the families of educated women are less likely to be poor. Education increases women's role in household decision making and their control over family assets (Agarwal, 1997; Lloyd and Young, 2009; Khandkar, 1998; Pitt and Khandkar, 1998). Women's control of resources is in turn closely linked to their children's cognitive abilities, their eventual school attainment and their adult productivity (Hoddinott and Haddad, 1995). Domestic violence rates are also tightly linked to women's education. Evidence shows that the Latin American and Asian women least likely to have experienced violence are the most likely to have completed secondary school (Kishor and Johnson, 2004).

The communities of educated women also accrue benefits from educating their girl children. As women expand their economic roles, communities experience more gender equality and economic prosperity (Lloyd, 2005; 2009; World Bank, 2006). Educated women are more likely to participate in community forums, thus furthering not only the democratic process but also political concerns that tend to improve the daily lives of families (Barro, 1999; Malhotra et al., 2003; Sen 1999; UNESCO, 2000). Studies in Indian women's education led to improvements in community health facilities (Drèze and Murthi, 1999; Mari Bhat, 1998). A study by the International Water and Sanitation Centre found that women's participation was the key to improving community access to clean water and sanitary facilities (Van Wijk-Sijbesma, 1998). Similarly, a study in Pakistan highlights how important local role models are to girls' success. Schools that were staffed with female teachers from the local community were found to have better retention rates than schools that were staffed with female teachers from outside the community (Ghuman and Lloyd, 2007; Lloyd et al., 2005; 2007), showing that each generation of girls is crucial to the success of the next.

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The impact of investing in girls and young women can also be seen at national and international levels. Declines in fertility, which reduce overall population growth and thus increase per capita income, coupled with a better educated, larger workforce, may produce rapid economic expansion (Bloom et al., 2002; Levine et al., 2009). For example, one study found that, if female labour force participation in India were similar to that of the US, India's gross domestic product (GDP) would be lifted by 4.2 percent a year and its growth would be 1.08 percent higher (UNESCAP, 2007). In order to promote higher female economic participation, investing in gender-sensitive vocational training for young women is critical, as they often face a more protracted and difficult transition to working life compared with their male counterparts (ILO, 2008). The lack of decent job prospects increases young women's vulnerability in the transition from childhood to adulthood, often trapping them in 'informal, intermittent and insecure work arrangements, characterised by low productivity, meagre earnings and reduced labour protection (ibid).'

Other studies have noted the costs of gender inequality. On average, countries with highly disparate educational enrolment rates have been estimated to have a GNP up to 25 percent lower than countries closer to achieving gender parity (Hill and King, 1995a; 1995b). Over time, it is predicted that this difference will continue to grow; an annual economic growth loss of 0.1 to 0.3 percent between 1995 and 2005 was expected to become an annual loss of 0.4 percent between 2005 and 2015 (Abu-Ghaida and Klasen, 2002). These seemingly small numbers aggregate to staggering sums. In addition to losing over \$40 billion per year as a result of women's limited access to employment, the Asia Pacific region alone is losing up to \$30 billion per year as a result of gaps in education (UNESCAP, 2007). Moreover, given that girls constitute part of the current demographic bulge, characterised by a relatively large number of young people of working age, ensuring that these young people are educated, healthy and gainfully employed leads to what some term a 'demographic dividend' and can make a major contribution to development (Marcus and Gavrilovic, 2010). Indeed, Bloom and Canning (2003, in DESA, 2007) point out that educated youth accounted for one-third of the growth of the 'tiger' economies from the 1960s to 1990s. When it comes to investing in tomorrow's women, it is obvious that ignorance is expensive.



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