



# Doing qualitative field research on gender norms with adolescent girls and their families

September 2015



**Knowledge to action:**  
Researching gender norms that affect adolescent girls



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Cover photo: Qualitative research in Viet Nam © Dao Hong Le, 2013

## Overview

- This Research and Practice Note outlines some key guidance on doing qualitative research on gender norms based on field research in Ethiopia, Nepal, Uganda and Vietnam.
- It outlines practical pointers for designing and carrying out research with different groups of people who influence gender norms, bringing together insights from our field experience of how to frame questions around norms and adolescence.
- It provides an overview of the tools used in our research with clickable links through to the question guides, and more in-depth guidance on four innovative and visual tools that we found particularly helpful.
- The Note concludes with links to other resources on doing research with children and adolescents.

## Setting the scene

There is already a great deal of guidance available on the principles and ethics of conducting qualitative research with children and young people. This Research and Practice Note adds to this body of work by drawing out some key pointers to bear in mind when undertaking qualitative research on gender norms with adolescent girls. It outlines some of the visual and innovative research tools used in the DFID-funded ODI programme, Transforming the Lives of Adolescent Girls and Young Women, which involved research in Ethiopia, Nepal, Uganda and Viet Nam. This Note focuses primarily on tools used in the second year of the programme, which focused on gender norms related to child marriage and education.

This Note begins by outlining some key pointers for undertaking research with adolescent girls living in poverty, and summarises some of the main tools used in our research. It then describes a step-by-step process for using four innovative or visual tools based on our experience of researching the impact of gender norms on adolescent girls in the four countries. It reflects on our experience of framing questions around social and gender norms, and links to the question guides and tools used throughout. The Resources section showcases further guidance on how to do qualitative research with children in general, and adolescent girls in particular.

Qualitative research is particularly valuable for understanding gender norms that affect adolescent girls, because it allows people's own perspectives and voices to come through, and gives the researcher a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in studying gender norms. By listening to what girls, their families and community leaders say, researchers can explore how people perceive the norms that pattern lives, and how they are - or are not - changing.. These insights can be invaluable in challenging received wisdom (see Box 2) and

questioning what policy-makers and programmers think they know about adolescent girls in particular contexts.

## Carrying out research with adolescent girls: key pointers

**Develop a conceptual framework that will allow you to identify key questions and expected relationships between different issues.** It will also help you organise your thoughts and findings. This may be a set of points in text form or be presented as a diagram. If you are exploring change processes, your conceptual framework needs to clarify your expected theory of change. As research progresses, you can refer back to the conceptual framework and test whether your expectations were correct.

**Do a thorough literature review.** This can reveal what is already known about adolescent girls in your areas of interest, and can identify studies that help frame, triangulate or support your findings from the field. Useful secondary sources include:

- National-level quantitative surveys (e.g. census or demographic and health survey), particularly if information is disaggregated by age and sex
- Smaller quantitative studies (e.g. programme monitoring data tracking the number of people accessing services)
- Qualitative, participatory and ethnographic studies (e.g. exploring marriage forms and practices), including those linked to programmes
- Baseline, mid-term and endline studies, which directly or indirectly include programme activities related to adolescents and young people
- Policies and legal frameworks relating to women, girls, adolescents and young people, particularly on health, education and vocational training
- Media sources (e.g. newspapers, magazine or web-based articles)

**Use each research tool as a guide, not a blueprint.** Adolescent girls are often shy or lack confidence to speak openly about topics that affect their lives – issues that are often culturally sensitive or even taboo, and certainly not discussed in public. In such cases, you (or other interviewers) should be aware of the girl’s demeanour, using the tool as a guide to structure the discussion and adapting it as necessary, while making sure that you cover all the topics of interest you need to.

**Keep research instruments short and focused and try to avoid overlapping or repetitive questions.** As a rule of thumb, aim for 90 minutes (at most) for an individual interview and not more than 120 minutes (two hours) for group discussions. Be mindful that girls often have many demands on their time (e.g. school studies and household chores) and, in some cases, may be unable to leave their homes unaccompanied.

**Include girls from different backgrounds and in different situations.** Adolescent girls have very different experiences, behaviour and attitudes, which are likely to be influenced by a range of factors. To ensure that your research captures this diversity, and depending on the context, you may want to target specific groups of girls, including: those in different age and wealth groups; those from different ethnic groups, religions and/or castes; married girls and single girls; girls with children; girls in school as well as out-of-school girls (see Box 1). When researching gender norms, it is important to include individual girls who appear not to conform to expected norms, so that you can explore key influences on norms.

**Include girls’ parents, grandparents, siblings and other family and community members.** As well as talking to girls, it can be helpful to talk with their parents (both fathers and mothers), adolescent boys and married girls’ husbands and in-laws, all of whom influence the environment in which girls are growing up. It can also be revealing to talk with health extension workers; teachers; religious and traditional leaders – as these individuals shape attitudes and behaviour through their role as opinion influencers, and with programme implementers and local government leaders, who shape some of the

possibilities available to adolescent girls. These groups can often give the ‘bigger picture’ as they often have greater exposure than girls and their families to the ‘wider world’. They also sometimes serve particular roles as ‘gatekeepers’ in the family and community, opening or closing doors to new information, attitudes or opportunities.

**Think through which issues are priorities for you to explore.** Time and budget constraints will mean that you cannot investigate everything that might be relevant for understanding what influences gender norms and need to define your scope and sample accordingly. We found that even across relatively small geographical areas, the districts we selected for research were diverse in terms of economic and educational opportunities, religion, and levels of poverty, all of which have a significant influence on how gender norms play out. We therefore concentrated on understanding how these different factors affect gender norms and girls’ opportunities within rural areas, rather than adding complexity by including urban areas as well. Of course, many of our key informants from government and NGOs were based in small towns or capital cities and in practice, they provided insights into rural-urban (and other) differences.

**Ask the obvious.** You might think that some questions have obvious answers, but ask them anyway – you might be surprised by someone’s response. People’s lives, and the gender relationships around which they are based, are never as clear-cut as you might think.

**Don’t assume you know the answers to a given question...** Local researchers, who will be familiar with local customs and practices, should not assume they know the answers to a certain question. For example, during our fieldwork in Amhara, Ethiopia, the researchers assumed that women were not part of the local militia. But they included a research question on this anyway: *can women be part of the local militia?* Much to the team’s surprise, asking this question yielded a very rich case study of a young woman who is the only female member of the local militia, and her male partner (they were not married – which is again unusual for the context). This couple were

### Box 1: Capturing diversity among adolescent girls

In Uganda, as well as exploring issues around early marriage, the research team also wanted to explore another important issue that emerged – early pregnancy. Given that pregnant girls are likely to have different experiences and perceptions according to whether they are married or unmarried, the team had to ensure they spoke to both categories.

In Ethiopia and Viet Nam, recognising the importance of political economy dynamics in shaping respondents’ views (and, in some cases, opportunities), the research teams sought to interview adolescent girls from households with and without government connections. This is not something that can be asked directly, but rather needs to be probed for indirectly and sensitively.

## Box 2: Challenging gender norms: the story of Dembashi's only female militia member

Zemenwua\* is an unmarried 23-year-old woman in Dembashi, West Gojjam (in Ethiopia's Amhara region). She is the only female militia member in the area. While she is the subject of considerable gossip, especially among female community members, she is proud of her role. Her success in overcoming conservative gender norms is all the more remarkable when contrasted with the life paths of her two older sisters, who both married as children, at the age of 3 and 5 respectively. But Zemenwua's parents have never tried to arrange a marriage for her, partly because of the disappointment of her sisters' multiple remarriages, and partly because of Zemenwua's own ambitions and hopes for her life. As she says: *'I told them that I would marry a husband who I want after I have completed my education and get employed. I told them also that I would not marry a husband they choose for me.'*

Despite the fact she failed her grade 10 exam, her ambition is to join the police force and is determined to put her career before marriage and indeed social approval: *'I know that it isn't good in our culture for a matured girl to be single. But I know what is good for me. If I engage in marriage, I will not compete for a job and not be able to participate in any training... It is very difficult to leave the home to search for a job once I get married. This is because it is the wife who is supposed to manage the housework here. Once a girl marries, her husband doesn't allow her to move freely. In this regard, it is good to be free.'*

Although she has had a boyfriend for four years, she is not ready for marriage and does not plan to have children until she is financially prepared. She stated: *'Giving birth to a baby without having sufficient and dependable income is like going to prison.'* Her boyfriend, an ex-priest and farmer, is subject to considerable pressure from peers and family members to find another partner given Zemenwua's unorthodox views and behaviour. But both of them believe that other people's disapproval of their relationship stems from a lack of education, so they are able to continue to defy the prevailing norms.

*\*Names have been changed to protect identities*

*Source: Outlier case study interview with a 23-year-old woman in Dembashi, West Gojjam*

defying or challenging local gender norms in numerous ways (Box 2).

### Use informal as well as formal sources of information.

You can glean valuable information from informal meetings or gatherings, such as having meals with villagers (Viet Nam), participating in coffee ceremonies (Ethiopia), and sleeping over in people's homes (Nepal). Discussions in these settings can be very revealing, as people often feel more relaxed than in a formal interview setting. It also

gives researchers a chance to observe how girls behave in these situations or to hear how other people speak about girls.

**Manage expectations.** Your respondents will probably have different motives for taking part in the research, and different expectations. Some might be skeptical, others might say what they think you want to hear rather than what they actually think. You can manage expectations by explaining clearly at the outset what the research team will (and will

## TIP

### Managing raised expectations

Our third year of fieldwork researched projects and programmes that targeted adolescent girls. Given this focus, it was likely that expectations would be raised among people in the study sites – for instance, that the team was planning to develop a project in their locality. To avoid this, the team had to explain very clearly the purpose and aims of the study right from the start.

During a workshop to develop the study tools, the team decided to use this explanation of what they planned to do:

*'We are exploring how people in this community are affected by early marriage and efforts to increase girls' schooling, and your perceptions and experiences of XX project/ programme. We are talking with men, women, boys and girls to understand how current programme support in XX [country] is functioning and ways in which it could be strengthened. We think your views are very important and should inform discussions around policies and programmes that aim to improve individual and community wellbeing. We'll be writing a report – there won't be any immediate effects but in the longer term we would hope that your views will be included.'*

not) be doing, and what respondents can and cannot expect.

**Manage ‘gatekeepers’.** Gatekeepers might be NGOs, government health workers, teachers or other service providers, or traditional/religious leaders. While these people or institutions are influential in their communities, and their views may provide rich data for analysis, they may also restrict your access to adolescent girls – for instance, only putting forward a particular category of respondent, which means you are unlikely to get a more complete or representative picture. There may also be some suspicions about why the researchers are wanting to interview adolescent girls in particular – in Nepal, the research team suspected that people feared they had links with traffickers, as trafficking of girls to India was a fairly common practice in the research area. To overcome this, try to liaise with different kinds of gatekeeper. Carefully explain the purpose and methodology of your fieldwork and why you might need to select respondents randomly, according to pre-defined criteria. As discussed above, it is important to explore gatekeeper’s perceptions of gender norms in their own right – they often have considerable influence on norms, attitudes and behaviour in their communities.

Parents and parents-in-law may also wonder why you wish to speak to their daughter/ daughter-in-law, especially if you ask to speak to her alone. Sometimes parents, parents-in-law or guardians may insist on participating alongside a girl and may influence her responses.

**Think through research ethics and how to protect your respondents.** You will inevitably be asking sensitive questions, so always adhere to ethical guidelines. International guidelines on ethical research exist, with particular focus on research with children and young people. National standards and guidelines are also important to adhere to. Think through how you might discuss these issues and any consequences for your participants, so that you can develop strategies for dealing with those consequences. Be aware that if girls have been

## TIP

### How to prevent parents/carers overinfluencing an interview

- Before you begin, clearly explain the purpose of the interview and why it is important that you speak to the girl on her own (e.g. so that she can give her views freely).
- Explain that you will interview the parent /carer too but on a different visit, because while their inputs are valuable you want to hear the girl’s thoughts and views as well.

at risk of, or exposed to, violence or psychological trauma, talking about their experiences may lead to more trauma. In these situations, you should explore coping strategies, such as linking the girls and their families with relevant services, providing information about those services, and informing local officials of what has happened, with the consent of the family and girl concerned (see Box 3 for an example of how the research team in Ethiopia followed up cases where eligible girls and their families had been excluded from a support programme).

**Engage stakeholders in the analysis process.** In light of your potentially sensitive findings around local gender norms, present draft findings to key stakeholders at different levels, including community, sub-national and national levels, to test emerging theories and triangulate information on key dynamics at the community and household levels. This, in turn, helps promote ownership of the findings among key stakeholders, particularly programme implementers and policy-makers. For example, in Uganda, field research findings were presented to district level officials and programme personnel whose comments and feedback in turn helped strengthen recommendations. District officials, in particular, appreciated being involved at this stage and hoped to use the findings in further planning and programming.

### Box 3: Helping vulnerable girls and families access government support

In Ethiopia, the team identified several adolescent girls and young women and their families who were eligible for programme support but who, for one reason or another, had been excluded. This led to the team raising the issue with local officials during routine debriefings after the fieldwork to share key findings.

In one case, for example, the local women’s association was going door-to-door to identify children who had never been enrolled in primary school so that they could encourage parents and help them get support from the local government if necessary. During one of the intergenerational trio interviews, the research team learned that a 12-year-old girl who was living with her mother after her parents had divorced had never been to school because the family were poor. Because she was from a remote sub-*kebele* (village sub-unit), they had not received a visitor as part of the door-to-door campaign. The research team informed the head of the local women’s association, who had a strong relationship with the *kebele* administrative leader, and they were assured that the girl’s case would be followed up.

## Framing questions about gender norms and adolescence

It is not always easy to approach research on norms directly. Even specialists hold different views about how to define and measure a social norm (see Box 4), so it is not surprising that individual researchers (who are conducting interviews in various local languages) and study participants themselves may have different interpretations of what constitutes a social norm.

That said, people often are happy to talk about local traditions and norms, either:

**Start with questions about what people actually do.** One way to start is to ask about local practices (what people do and when) that are relatively easy to observe and therefore describe accurately (see Box 5 for some examples related to child marriage). Then you can move on to what people think is the right thing to do and what happens if people do not conform to gender norms.

**Frame your discussions in terms of local customs and traditions.** During our discussions with community members, particularly when we were asking about how social norms have changed over time, the language often

turned to *'customs'* or *'traditions'*, which were generally well understood by most people. For example, our research in Uganda often led to responses such as *'In our culture, we marry our girls as soon as they have their first menstruation,'* or *'In our traditions, girls must marry as soon as their breasts begin to bud.'* The research team in Ethiopia found that respondents appreciated being asked about their cultural values. Framing questions in terms of customs and traditions, and inviting people to talk about what happened in the past as opposed to now can be helpful in encouraging older respondents to reflect on the changes they have seen.

Listen to Professor Grace Kyomuhendo Bantebya discussing the framing of questions about gender norms in Uganda. Grace suggests that it is helpful to ask about the kinds of things that people believe, practise and are considered normal about a certain subject – in this case, marriage.

### Box 4: Different approaches to understanding and measuring social norms: implications for field research on gender norms

You will find research across various disciplines that can help you to understand and measure social norms. The approaches we have drawn on in this Research and Practice Note are mainly based on ethnographic/ social anthropological approaches. But there are other approaches to identifying reference groups – those who influence whether norms change or not.

Psychological approaches span qualitative and quantitative research, with the latter being more readily employed for understanding individuals' perceptions of a particular norm. Questionnaires most often use a Likert-scale response to find out how strongly a person agrees or disagrees with a statement linked to the norm(s) in question. For example, items on the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale (Pulerwitz and Barker, 2008) lie on a 4-point Likert scale and include statements such as 'In my opinion, a woman can suggest using condoms just like a man can'. Similarly, Hoffman and Kloska (1995) developed a scale to assess parents' gender-based attitudes towards child-rearing and included statements such as 'I would give a daughter as much encouragement and help in getting an education as I would a son'.

Self-report questionnaires have been used to find out which groups of people are responsible for perpetuating norms. They tend to be restricted to parents, peers, and teachers (as the main forces influencing children and adolescents' lives), so their scope is somewhat limited. While these kinds of psychological approaches have been instrumental in developing a deeper understanding of how social norms affect individuals, they are unable to capture why particular norms either change or persist.

Researchers and practitioners are experimenting with different ways to measure expectations or norms in societies. One simple way to investigate the strength of a given norm is to ask what would happen if someone did not adhere to it (Mackie et al., 2012). Bicchieri et al. (2014) suggest that vignettes can be used to help identify which norms are strongest in a given society; people would not be asked to give their own views but instead are asked to say what a typical person would do in a particular situation. Some researchers have drawn on social network analysis to identify those members of a reference group who have either more or less influence. For example, Mackie et al. (2012) suggest that one way of doing this is to ask respondents themselves who has the greatest influence on decisions that affect them.

### Box 5: Questions that can help you find out about local norms and practices on age at marriage

At what age do most girls (and boys) get married in this community? Has this been changing? How/why?

You can then ask other questions to find out more about the norms that govern what people do and when:

- *What do people in this community think is a good age to get married, and why?*
- *What happens/what do people say if someone gets married at a later age?*
- *Why do parents marry their girls off at an early or later age? What age do girls prefer to get married?*
- *Are there some ideas/customs/ attitudes that promote or discourage girls' marriage at an early age/later age? Have these ideas/attitudes etc. changed over time? Why? In what ways?*
- *Are there specific people/groups who actively work to keep girls marrying at an early age? Who are these people? Why does their opinion carry weight? Why are they influential?*
- *Are there specific groups working to move the desirable age of marriage for girls? Who are they?*
- *Does their opinion carry weight? Why?*

Other questions can probe the reasons why individual respondents did what they did, and when, such as:

- *At what age did you get married?*
- *Why did you get married at the age you did?*
- *Did you/others feel this was a good age to get married? Why? What would have happened if you had waited to get married at a later age?*

**Use questions that will connect with respondents with limited education.** Some respondents found it difficult to identify the reasons for changes. Our research team in Ethiopia suggest:

‘In the individual interviews and outlier case studies ... there are some questions which are not easily understood, especially by people who do not have good analytical skills. They can't see a situation and tell what has happened. And also asking them about feelings, psychological feelings, they are much easier to deal than economic things. And hypothetical questions. Hypothetical plus psychological feelings... may be better’ (Ethiopia).

**Be mindful of people's incentives to present themselves in a good light.** This can be an issue both for individuals who want to present themselves or their families positively and community leaders or officials who wish to communicate a positive view of their community or of local norms. Sometimes when people step back from talking about themselves and focus on their culture or community they can be candid. As one of the Nepal research team said:

‘When you're talking about [their] family, they are talking about themselves so they want to show themselves in a positive light. When you're talking to these key informants, you're not asking them about themselves, you're asking them about society, so in that way they can be more truthful. So there is less chance of them being untruthful.’

**Triangulate among different respondents to get a full view of norms and how they operate.** It can be challenging to uncover how norms operate in the institutions that govern adolescent girls' development opportunities (i.e. the family/household, schools, health centres, local government and law enforcement, etc.). For instance, what a local teacher might say about how gender norms operate in the classroom might be very different from what students or parents would say, so you should gather inputs from a variety of people and make sure to cross-reference them.

Listen to Professor Grace Kyomuhendo Bantebya discussing the importance of understanding the social institutions and groups of people that uphold gender norms in Uganda. These include the household, and two groups of people: elders and paternal aunts who are often overlooked but who play an important role in upholding existing gender norms or enabling change.

**Be mindful of how people perceive adolescence, and adolescent girls and boys.** In our research the Nepali team felt that it was more challenging to frame questions around ‘adolescents’ than around social norms.

According to the lead researcher:

*'I think, for social norms, it is not difficult because in Nepalese society, we have words for 'social norm' – so many different words for that ... What was difficult was 'adolescent'. As soon as you say adolescent, it is not a normal everyday talking language and mostly when our respondents knew about it, they only knew about it from the health perspective, mostly HIV/AIDS and sexual diseases. So when we started our research, it was even a bit difficult to start to talk about it because they immediately thought we were someone coming to speak to them about HIV/AIDS.'*

*(Anita Ghimire, lead researcher, Nepal, interview April 2015).*

By talking about 'adolescents', given the association with sexual and reproductive health in the local setting (and particularly HIV and AIDS), researchers in Nepal were more likely to find their respondents reluctant to discuss issues, because discussing adolescence *'is mostly linked to sexuality and ... in a Nepali context, it is kind of a social stigma to talk about it'*. Participants were also uncomfortable discussing the issue of pregnancy outside of marriage. So the researchers used an indirect approach and framed the issue in terms of factors that shape girls' future wellbeing.

## Key tools

Table 1 (on page 10) outlines some of the innovative tools developed by the ODI research team, which were tailored for use in Ethiopia, Nepal, Uganda and Viet Nam. The table summarises the purpose of each tool, describes which respondents were selected for interview and why, and has tips to help you get the best out of each tool. It includes some sample questions. For each tool you can click through to the full set of questions used in our research.

We will now outline three steps you should follow to get going with your research and see it through to the analysis

stage. We do not go into detail on analysis though, as much of the advice and guidance is not specific to research with adolescent girls and their families.

## Three steps to put your research plan into action

### Step 1: Build your team and pilot the tools

**Build a balanced team:** Ensure that you have a balanced team (in terms of gender, age, religion, ethnic group or caste) as all of these factors can affect interviewees' responses. When conducting research with adolescent girls, you should also include younger women in the team (and younger men if appropriate) as both and boys may find it easier to talk to a same-sex adult who is close to their age. This also creates opportunities for older team members to mentor and help develop younger members.

**Pilot the tools:** Your research on how gender norms affect adolescent girls is likely to cover many sensitive issues, so careful piloting is essential. In ODI field research, each country team took the time to go through the tools, making sure that all team members had the same understanding of the key concepts and themes, adapting them to the context if need be, or adding other sub-themes

### Box 6: Encourage reflexivity

You should encourage research team members to be reflexive (that is, to consider the effect of their presence on what is being investigated). This process can contribute rich insights into the findings, and can lead to other enlightened or probing questions.

In many cases, national researchers may share similar backgrounds and/or experiences with the research participant. In Uganda, for instance, during debrief sessions, members of the research team talked a great deal about their own experiences as adolescents and of the traditions around marriage and virginity in their home areas. In Nepal, some members of the research team had married relatively early, through arranged marriages, and thus felt bound by the same social norms that were being investigated. As the lead researcher in Nepal said:

*'I reflected on my own experience because I also belong to the same community and I'm also bound by so many of those social norms. And I also have a daughter who is bound by the same norms. So a lot of the time I reflected on my personal life and also in the lives of the place where I live and the girls where I live, which is a more urban area. And it has been very interesting because I grew up in the eastern part of the country where these norms are much more flexible.'*

**Table 1: Research tools developed or used to examine gender norms and their impact on adolescent girls' lives (with a particular focus on marriage and education issues)**

Tool	Purpose	Who to interview and why	Key questions to ask	Tips on how to get the best out of the tool
<b>Community mapping (community timeline, institutional mapping, etc.)</b>	To explore norms around marriage and education, how these may have changed over time, and what lies behind any changes	Community leaders (formal and informal); ensure a balance of participants in terms of gender/age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you tell us about key events in your community? What have been the biggest changes over time? What are the drivers of these changes? Have there been changes in what is expected of adolescents (boys and girls), of girls' education, and of marriage?</li> </ul>	Use a visual timeline and record positive changes above the line, negative changes below it
<b>Focus group discussions (with girls and boys separately)</b>	<p>To capture local definitions of adolescence, masculinity and femininity; to capture local norms of what it means to be a good (or bad) boy/girl; to capture local norms and expectations around marriage and education, and how each affects the other</p> <p>To explore adolescents' reference groups (in terms of enforcing social norms)</p>	Older boys, older girls, younger boys, younger girls, in groups of 6-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you define adolescence?</li> <li>What does it mean to be an adolescent boy/adolescent girl? How do boys and girls experience adolescence differently?</li> <li>Have there been changes in the roles and responsibilities (and perceptions) of adolescents over time?</li> <li>What are your views on masculinity/femininity?</li> <li>What kind of boy/girl would be the ideal marriage partner?</li> <li>What do you think of marriage?</li> <li>What do you think about girls' education and the kind of future girls might have?</li> <li>What kinds of programme would help adolescent girls overcome their problems?</li> </ul>	<p>Include body mapping exercise (see next row) to help people feel comfortable and focus on issues under discussion</p> <p>You should ensure that you get a range of views from the whole group, not just a collection of individuals' views</p> <p>If participants are not forthcoming with their views, particularly on what kind of programming would help, ask them to rank some different pre-prepared context-specific options and to explain why they chose the top three (for example)</p>
<b>Body mapping</b>	To explore gender differences and adolescent girls' and boys' experiences (good or bad) in terms of their physical and mental health and wellbeing, community perceptions of young people, freedom to socialise independently, etc.	Focus group participants (see row above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask the group to draw a life-size picture of a girl or boy. The</li> <li>n ask probing questions according to different body parts and what dimensions of adolescent wellbeing they represent</li> </ul>	<p>As well as having a visual record, you should capture and record discussions to help analyse the data</p> <p>If participants are not used to drawing, this can be a difficult tool to use</p>
<b>In-depth interview (on norms around marriage/ education)</b>	To capture individuals' perceptions on norms around marriage/ education	Boys with adolescent sisters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What makes the ideal girl, boy, man, woman? What would make someone an ideal marriage partner? What would make someone an undesirable marriage partner? What are your views on marriage? What are your views on education for girls?</li> </ul>	It may be better to focus on older rather than younger adolescents as they may be better able to respond to questions on perceptions/ relationships

**Table 1 (continued)**

<p><b>Focus group discussions with parents</b></p>	<p>To explore views on adolescence and how boys and girls experience adolescence differently, from the point of view of parents of adolescents; to explore parents' views on their proper role in their children's marriage and education</p>	<p>The mothers and fathers of adolescent boys and girls; depending on the context, this could either be done in separate groups (mothers only, fathers only) or together</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think good parents are expected to do vis-à-vis marriage for their children?</li> <li>• Is it worth educating boys? Is it worth educating girls? Why (or why not)?</li> </ul>	<p>Try to get a discussion going rather than a series of individual interviews or yes/no responses</p>
<p><b>Key informant interview</b></p>	<p>To capture views of different stakeholders on the social and political context, as well as impact of programmes and policies; to explore local histories, trends and changes over time</p>	<p>You should purposively select individuals in influential roles, including community leaders (formal as well as informal/traditional leaders), government officials, NGO representatives, and religious leaders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the trends in marriage/ gender roles/ education for girls over time?</li> <li>• What factors have driven these trends?</li> <li>• How have policies and programmes responded to these changes at local, regional and national levels?</li> <li>• What is working well and what are the challenges?</li> <li>• What actions would you recommend to support more progressive and equal gender roles in future?</li> </ul>	<p>Remind the interviewee that you want to know what he/she really thinks, rather than what they think you want to hear</p> <p>Try to triangulate information they give from grassroots sources/other observations</p> <p>Avoid discussing a specific programme or policy at the outset in case the interviewee is reluctant to speak critically of it</p> <p>Ask your interviewee to give evidence to support their views – how do they know if a certain policy/programme is effective or not?</p>
<p><b>Intergenerational trio</b></p>	<p>To capture different views of members of the same family (spanning three generations) around social norms and expectations of boys and girls/men and women; and around marriage and education, and how they affect each other</p>	<p>Three generations in the same family, trio can be female or male, so:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grandmother – mother – daughter</li> <li>• Grandfather – father – son</li> </ul> <p>Can be interviewed all together, as a pair (grandmother and granddaughter tend to work well together) or individually, depending on timing and availability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Grandmother or mother) What was expected of a wife/husband when you were young? How is this different from today?</li> <li>• How were marriages negotiated when you were young? Who did the negotiating? What was considered a 'good' marriage? Is this still the case today?</li> <li>• Did girls or boys have a say in the choice of marriage partner? Do they have a say today?</li> <li>• What are your expectations vis-à-vis marriage for your own children, and why?</li> </ul>	<p>You could use visual timelines to help people describe their life histories</p> <p>People may claim their family covers three generations when in fact it does not; make sure you verify whether the family genuinely spans three generations before the main interview</p> <p>Older people may struggle to remember ages and dates; ask them to name key events and try to triangulate this information later with key informants</p>

**Table 1 (continued)**

<p><b>Marital network</b></p>	<p>To capture differences between a girl as a wife, daughter and sister and her spouse as a husband, son and brother; to capture people's views and experiences on who makes decisions (particularly on marriages) and holds power in the household; and on marriage and education, and how they affect each other</p>	<p>A married girl (can be an adolescent or a bit older) and her husband should be the starting point – then interview each partner's mother and father. Each individual to be interviewed separately</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were your expectations about marriage before you married, and is your actual experience of marriage different (particularly roles and relationships with wife/husband/ in-laws?)</li> <li>• What was the relationship between your parents and parents-in-law like? Did they/would they ever intervene in the marriage? Why? How?</li> </ul>	<p>When triangulating information given by all members of the marital network, be aware of sensitivities and power dynamics between family members (whether siblings, parents/children, daughters-in-law and parents-in-law, etc). Try not to breach confidentiality by relying on information given by one family member when interviewing another. Be careful about how you formulate questions so that you do not reveal information that could only have been sourced from a direct relative of the interviewee</p> <p>In some settings, it might be advisable to interview the husband/father/ father-in-law first so as to minimise any negative perceptions about the interview topic (since men usually are the decision-makers or gatekeepers to other members of the family, particularly wives and daughters).</p> <p>Some maternal relatives may not be nearby, so researchers will need to travel</p> <p>Lack of men due to migration in some sites</p>
<p><b>Outlier case study/ life history</b></p>	<p>To explore the life history of individuals; this can reveal the different pathways people choose in either conforming to or defying prevailing gender norms, and the consequences of doing so</p>	<p>Focus on girls and women with strongly positive or negative experiences when either conforming to or defying gender norms – snowballing, or identifying these girls by word of mouth, is critical here</p> <p>Focus on older adolescents/ young women (up until early 20s) who may be better able to reflect on consequences of decisions vis-à-vis conforming to or defying gender norms</p> <p>Teachers/ government workers from the local community who left to study and returned may be good candidates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What has happened so far in your life and how did you get to where you are today?</li> <li>• Is your experience typical of or different from other girls in your community?</li> <li>• What explains this difference?</li> <li>• Did anyone support you to do what you did? Did anyone oppose what you wanted to do?</li> <li>• What were the consequences of what you did? Did you have to make any difficult trade-offs or compromises?</li> <li>• Looking back, would you have done anything differently?</li> </ul>	<p>Girls who have chosen to uphold prevailing norms may find it difficult to reflect on the consequences of their actions because there are likely to be fewer negative consequences of upholding prevailing norms</p>

as necessary. The teams then translated the tools and familiarised themselves with them through role play.

The teams then chose a different location to the proposed study sites in order to test the tools. The piloting process meant they could iron out a number of issues including timing of activities, sequencing of questions, questions that were difficult for participants to understand, and identifying which team members were most comfortable with certain tools. The tools could then be finalised.

## Step 2: Develop a research plan and timeline

Your research plan should set out:

- The sequencing of the tools (which tools are used when). Think about a good ‘entry point’ – for instance, a community mapping or timeline is a good way to introduce the research topics (and team members) to the local community.
- Who each tool will be used with (which kinds of respondent)
- How many respondents you need for each tool (this will depend on your available resources and how far you need to triangulate (cross-reference) findings). Be careful to avoid research saturation (the point at which you start hearing the same responses over and over again)
- How long each interview or group discussion will take
- Which team members will conduct which interviews
- The outputs you expect from your research (e.g. maps drawn by members of the community, photos, notes, voice recordings, etc.)

*Use your research plan flexibly.* If it looks as if your proposed sequencing of tools will not work, if the timings are not working out as anticipated, or if someone presents themselves to be interviewed earlier than expected, adapt the plan.

## Step 3: Doing the field research

Before you arrive at the study site, make sure you have done the preparatory groundwork so that the field research starts smoothly. Preparations may consist of a pre-field visit, where the lead researcher presents the purpose of the research and the plan to the local community and key stakeholders at village and district levels. Carrying letters of introduction and permissions may ease this process. If travel to the research sites is not possible, phone calls are the next best option.

A preliminary visit may also help to set up individual or group interviews so that the research team can begin conducting interviews soon after arrival. But additional courtesy visits to key stakeholders upon arrival will also be important. This is also important to secure buy in to the research objectives and also to facilitate maximum access to the communities. Despite the best-laid plans, not everything will go smoothly (for example, some interviewees may not turn up at the allotted time, the team may have to wait a few hours before starting an interview, or the allotted translator may be not available). So be flexible and adaptable.

### Box 7: Getting the basics ready

Before you start, make sure you have any materials you will need – flip charts, marker pens, coloured papers, post-its, sticky tape, tape recorder, batteries, etc.

Select the most appropriate location and time for each interview or group discussion. This will vary depending on the tool being applied and the respondents involved:

- If you are talking or doing a body mapping with school girls or boys, you will need to have obtained permission from the headteacher and find an appropriate space within the school
- If you are carrying out a community or institutional mapping and community timeline, you should seek the involvement of key informants and community leaders, choosing a central location for the gathering
- If you are doing an intergenerational trio, marital network or outlier case study, doing the interviews in respondents’ homes tends to work best, but try to use a room or space that is out of earshot of other family members
- Before interviewing girls, appropriate parental/carer permission should be sought

Ensure that the timing of the meeting is appropriate for local (including seasonal) conditions

- If you are conducting research activities in schools, then it may be best to schedule them during breaks, lunchtime or after school

Ensure that refreshments or/and transport refunds (if applicable) are available

Ensure there are at least two facilitators for group discussions – one to lead the discussion and one note-taker

## How to use four key research tools

In this section we explain how to implement four tools used in and developed for our research that we found particularly valuable in researching the impact of gender norms on adolescent girls. Some of the other tools we used (such as in-depth interviews) included some innovative questions, such as questions on ideal men, women, boys and girls. You can click through to these from Table 1.

1. Group discussions (focusing on community mapping, body mapping, community timeline)
2. Intergenerational trios
3. Marital networks
4. Outlier case studies

## Group discussions using community mapping, timelines and body mapping tools

*Purpose:* To explore gender norms and influences on them using visual tools in a community setting

## How to conduct a group discussion using the community/ institutional mapping and timeline, and body mapping tools

### Stage 1: Select the right type and number of respondents

Ideally, for a group discussion, you need 8-12 participants (generally, the larger the group the more difficult it is to facilitate).

- Bear in mind that the number of participants will vary depending on the kind of meeting - community timelines and mappings are likely to involve more people, while body mapping (with girls) will probably involve fewer participants
- Be flexible. If only four people turn up for a group meeting, for instance, it is still worth going ahead

### *Body mapping*

- Select adolescent girls and boys in school and out of school
- Carry out separate body maps with girls and boys
- If possible, split adolescents into a younger group (aged 13-15) and older group (15-19), since their experiences and knowledge are likely to differ widely

### Box 7: Body mapping

You can help participants by asking some probing questions. The examples given here are from a body mapping exercise in Nepal:

- **Arms and hands:** What kinds of activities are young people involved in? (Leisure, work within or outside the home, education, etc.). Are there things you would like to do but can't? If so, what are they? What stops you doing those things?
- **Legs and feet:** Are there any restrictions on how adolescents use their time or move around (outside the home)? For example, for work, study or income generation? Is this the same for boys and girls?
- **Head:** What are the main things you think about? How do you learn and who do you learn from? Do you think there are differences between boys and girls in how they learn and who they learn from?
- **Eyes:** What do adults think about adolescents? Are there differences in thinking about boys and girls? How have these general perceptions affected your own views about things in your life?
- **Ears:** How do community members listen to young people; or how do young people listen to adults?
- **Mouth:** How do adults talk to young people and/or how do young people talk to each other?
- **Main body:** What health issues affect adolescents in your community? Are they protected from different forms of abuse or exploitation?
- **Heart:** What are some of the feelings that young people have to deal with? Who do you get support from in times of need?

The body map worked well in Nepal, especially when it was carried out with school-going girls. Using the different parts of the body helped them to think about what they did, how other people thought of them, and how this was different for boys.

It also helped them speak relatively freely, which revealed some different perspectives. For instance, while in some interviews girls said they felt shy to speak out in front of teachers, a girl in the body mapping pointed out that she was not worried about talking to her teachers, though she doubted they listened: *'I talk to my teachers about whatever I feel like, I am not afraid. People may not listen to us, even when we are 100% correct. They say "you are young", so they do not value what we say.'*

- Ensure that you get appropriate permissions from parents/carers and/or teachers prior to carrying out the activity

### Community/institutional mapping

- These are typically conducted in mixed groups with various community members
- If you are doing a community timeline, make sure there are sufficient numbers of older people in the meeting, who have longer recall, though it is also good to triangulate their responses if possible

### Stage 2: Introduce and conduct the exercises

The facilitator should introduce the exercise and seek informed consent

- This can be verbal or written – although bear in mind that written consent can be more time-consuming and may raise suspicions. (In some situations, participants’ verbal consent can be recorded)
- The group discussions are based on a pre-prepared guide but it is important to ask probing questions (e.g. ‘can you tell me more about x or y...’) to find out more and follow up specific points raised

### Body mapping

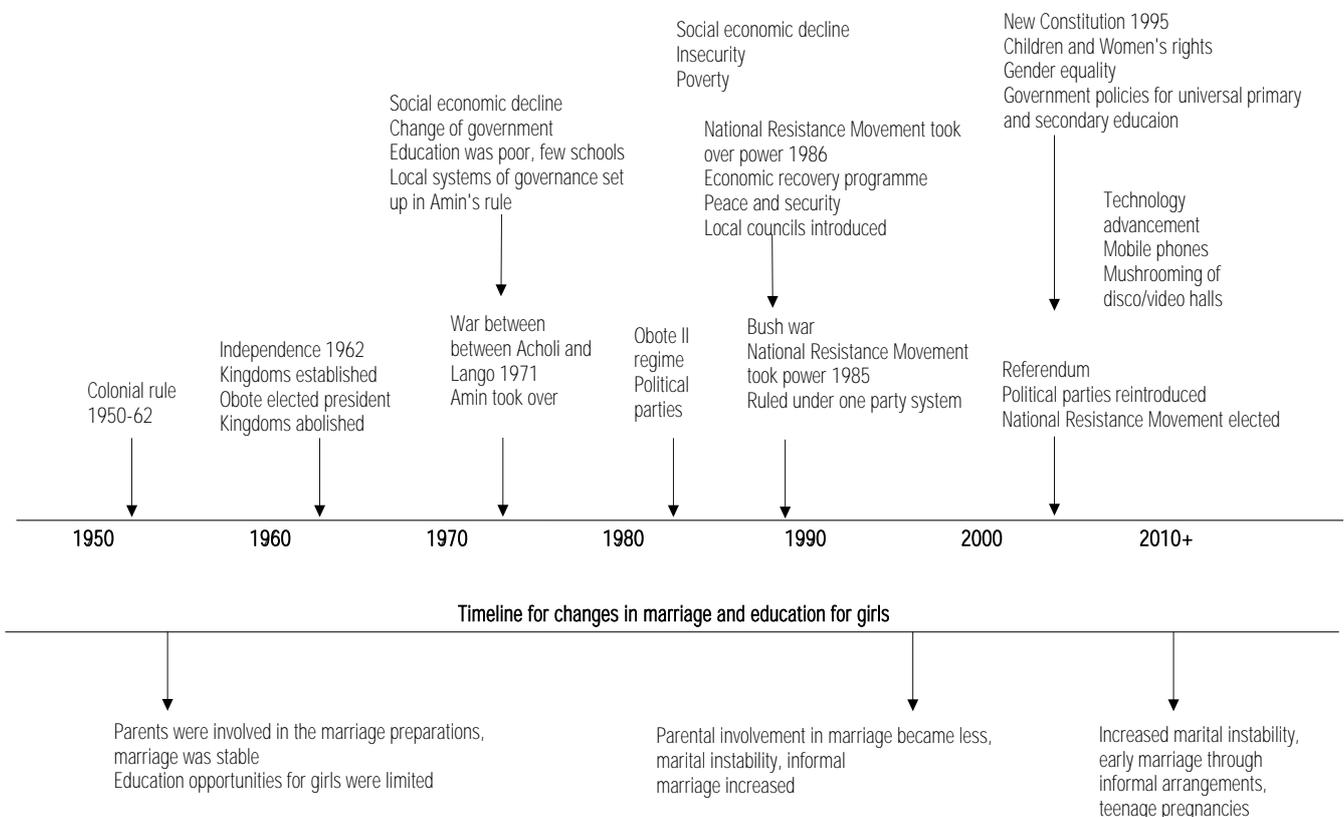
- Ask participants to draw the body of both a girl and boy, ideally on separate sheets. For each of the body parts, ask them to explain what girls and boys can and cannot do
- Ask them to identify vulnerabilities/ challenges (on the left side of the body) and solutions/ coping responses/ capabilities (on the right side)

We found body mapping to be a useful way of focusing on different aspects of girls’ and boys’ lives and how they are regulated by gender norms. They proved a way to engage shyer adolescents who did not always feel comfortable in a group discussion. Box 7 on the previous page provides more detail on how we used body mapping.

### Community mapping

- Ask participants to draw the key services, infrastructure and natural resources available in their community
- Ask participants to think about services (e.g. leisure spaces) specifically for adolescents girls and boys

Figure 1: Community timeline from Uganda



Source: Kyomuhendo Bantebya, Muhanguzi and Watson, 2014

### Community timeline (see Figure 1)

- Ask participants to select a point in time as their start point
- If necessary, link to broader national (or even international) events to help stimulate discussions
- One side of the timeline can include national/regional events, the other side can include events particular to the area/community in question
- Ask participants about any changes over time (good or bad) particularly in relation to social norms and how they affect adolescent girls.

Click [here](#) to see the questions we used in community mapping.

## Intergenerational trios

*Purpose:* To understand how experiences and perspectives on gender norms have varied across different generations of a family.

### How to conduct an intergenerational trio (IGT)

#### Stage 1: Select respondents

- Your trio should comprise an adolescent girl, her mother and grandmother or an adolescent boy, his father and grandfather
- Before starting interviewing all three members of the family, be sure to find out whether they are, in fact, all from the same family
- You can identify potential IGT respondents through the group discussions, individual interviews with adolescent girls or boys, or through key informant interviews

### Box 8: Community mapping example on finding out how national events or crises can be linked with changes in gender norms

Undertaking a community timeline can help you to put changes in gender norms in context, and particularly to understand any changes over time. People might link changes in gender norms with broader changes (such as major political or economic crises). One village official in a mainly Muslim area of Ethiopia gave this insightful observation when discussing how women and girls' rights have changed:

'After the disintegration of the Derg, EPRDF/OPDO (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front/Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization) came and schools were constructed near to our kebele. Since then, many male and female students attend schools in their villages and some of them have already completed and are employed already. I know about 12 to 13 females who have completed their secondary education and are employed in government offices. I also know some girls who joined the military to be soldiers as a result of education...

If we compare the Haile Selassie regime with the EPRDF in terms of education and girls' marriage, I can say the difference is as huge as the space between the sky and the earth. At that time, the poor were not able to marry. Those who married were the rich and well-to-do groups...

Then after the Derg came to power, the land was given to poor tenants. However, they called us to war as a compensation for the land they gave us. The poor again faced another sort of problem. We did not go to school because of the forced recruitment of young men to war ...

By contrast, after the disintegration of the Derg, the EPRDF came to power and things became better and better. Schools were opened everywhere. We are allowed to speak and learn in our own language. Our rights are respected ... every person recognised as an equal citizen. Especially for girls, who were severely affected ... as a result of abduction. These kind of harmful practices have been really reduced during this EPRDF time. Females' rights were declared and respected...

Formerly, women were limited to taking off men's shoes and washing them. If they refused to do it, they would be beaten with mule rope (alenga). When her husband came from somewhere on his horse or mules she should wait for him outside ... Otherwise she would face her beating with a stick or horse rope ... Now, she ... is educated, participates in public discussions, is involved in various activities.

Thanks to this government, there are lots of discussions by which we all acquire very good awareness on the bad habits and bad traditions (like polygamy and marrying own brother's wife (dhali)), which seems good for us but is extremely harmful particularly for females.'

### Box 9: Using an ‘intergenerational trio’ lens to can help us understand why norms around child marriage can remain ‘sticky’

Discussing how social norms shape people’s life opportunities and expectations with three different generations is a powerful way to reveal the forces that drive change as well as those that reinforce discriminatory norms. Take the example of Bethelihem (aged 47), Estibel (32) and Segenet (16) – three generations of the same family, from West Gojjam zone, Amhara (Ethiopia). When Bethelihem was a child, not many girls went to school because there was no local primary school. Besides, her parents assumed, from the day she was born, that ‘*I would belong to another family – my future husband’s*’ so didn’t think it worthwhile to invest in sending her to school. Betrothed at the age of 5 and married at the age of 10, Bethelihem had no say in deciding who she wanted to marry. In fact, the first time she was aware of her impending marriage was the morning of the wedding day.

Having suffered in what turned out to be an abusive marriage, Bethelihem had hoped her daughters’ ‘luck in life’ would be better than her own. But while she was able to insist on a basic primary education for Estibel, once she reached the age of 12, Bethelihem’s husband insisted on marrying Estibel off to the first available suitor, given concerns about her ‘purity’ and the family honour. Fortunately, Estibel was protected from very early pregnancy by a local protective custom called ‘*gaido*’ whereby husbands are expected to give a verbal commitment (and increasingly a written commitment too) to abstain from a sexual relationship with their bride until she is ‘physically mature’. In Estibel’s case, the husband made this commitment until she turned 15.

Estibel’s daughter, Segenet, has benefited from significant changes in attitudes at the local level towards girls’ education over the past decade or so. She is now in grade 10 and hopes to go to university as long as she can pass the upcoming ‘do-or-die’ national exams. However, her relatives (all except her mother) are starting to pressure her to marry, convinced that girls’ education will have limited pay-offs and that she risks becoming ‘*haftu*’ (‘on-the-shelf’) if she does not marry by the time she is 18.

*\* All names have been changed*

- Conduct IGT interviews with respondents from different wealth or social backgrounds and in different situations (e.g. adolescents in school and out of school).

#### Stage 2: Introduce the purpose of the interviews then conduct it

- Clearly explain the purpose of the interview at the start as well as any ethical procedures necessary (including seeking verbal or written consent from the participant/parent/guardian)
- In some situations it may be difficult to interview all three members of the trio at the same time. If so, you could interview all three individually or in twos (daughter and grandmother often work best)
- If for some reason the interview is not proceeding well, shorten or bring it to a close and suggest returning at another time to interview respondents individually
- Make use of visual tools such as a timeline (with positive experiences on one side and negative on the other) to draw out details of respondents’ experiences across generations
- Questions should be similar for all three respondents in the trio but you should tweak them according to the person’s generation
- Use the pre-prepared tool to guide the interview, useful probing questions to get further details can include:

- *How are things different between your generation and your mother’s (father’s) generation or your grandmother’s (grandfather’s generation)?*

- *What are your hopes for the future? (Or what were your hopes, for mothers/grandmothers or fathers/grandfathers). How are they different from your mother’s or grandmother’s generation?*

Click [here](#) to see the questions we used in intergenerational trios.

*‘[One of] the most exciting tools that I thought were very powerful is the intergenerational trio. Because that gives one the issues around the grandmother, and the issues around the mother and then the girl herself. And so if you want to measure change, if you want to track change of some of these practices, that is the best tool because these three generations could have reviewed the situation, what it was in their time’. (Uganda)*

## Marital network analysis

*Purpose:* To understand roles and relationships and power and decision-making within marriage, and married girls' sources of support.

### How to conduct a marital network analysis

#### Stage 1: Select respondents

- Marital networks consist of a woman and her husband, and both sets of parents – thus a total of 3 couples or 6 people are interviewed, all separately
- It is usual to interview the woman first, then her husband
- It is best to identify potential respondents through the group meetings or with the help of key informants
- It will help if the couple's parents live nearby, and if you have sought permission to interview all three couples before starting
- Choose marital networks that involve women from different backgrounds (e.g. wealth or ethnic group, level of schooling, age at marriage, etc.).

#### Stage 2: Introduce and conduct the interview

- Explain the purpose of the interview and adhere to ethical guidelines (seeking verbal or written consent, for example)
- Use visual tools to help – for instance, to elicit expectations around what makes an ideal woman/wife or man/husband (see example below from Uganda)
- Use the pre-prepared guide during the interview, useful probing questions to get further details include:
  - *What were your expectations about marriage and the role of an ideal wife/husband before you married?*

- *How are these different from your actual experience as a married woman/man (in terms of the roles and relationships between a wife/husband/in-laws)?*

- *How do parents and parents-in-law interact with the couple and what role do they play in the relationship?*

Click [here](#) to see the questions we asked in marital network analysis.

### Outlier case studies

*Purpose:* To explore the forces that have led to an individual either conforming to gender norms, or defying them.

#### How to conduct an outlier case study

'[With] an outlier instrument where the girl actually talks about her journey as a child in the family, talks about her mother, her father, her grandmother, her peers at school and all the things that made a difference, when you do an analysis it is possible to capture the key things that could make a difference in a girl's life.' (Uganda research team)

#### Stage 1: Select respondents

- Choose respondents (girls) who are good examples of either having conformed to social norms or who have defied them, the outcome of which could either be positive or negative
- Older adolescent girls or young women (up to age 20) are more likely to have experiences to tell of the kind you are interested in

### Box 10: How a marital networks analysis can reveal cross-generational and gendered power dynamics within a family

We used the marital networks analysis tool in all four countries. Among other things, it revealed that in-laws have varying degrees of influence over their daughters-in-law, depending on the local context. Among the Hmong community in northern Viet Nam, for example, parents lamented that they have relatively little influence these days. Even if their child chose a spouse they did not like, they could not change the situation, but would just have to deal with the disappointment. As one mother in a marital network interview said: *'If my son had found a wife who I didn't like, I wouldn't have turned her down.'*

In Nepal, by contrast, the marital networks analysis suggested that in-laws retain a strong influence over girls marrying into the family. It emerged that when a girl marries and moves into her husband's home, she may face abuse from her husband and (particularly in Doti) from her mother-in-law. She can, for instance, face verbal abuse, and even be thrown out of the house, if she is not performing the household tasks expected of her. Wife beating was not an uncommon practice. Women are often afraid to report domestic violence, either because they do not perceive it as a violation of their rights or because they cannot risk being thrown out of the house, given that they are dependent on their husbands financially and socially. They do report using some informal coping strategies, though, such as talking to peers or female relatives.

In Uganda in our marital network samples, all five of the girls interviewed had chosen their own partner, while only two out of each of the generation of mothers, mothers-in-law and aunts had done so. Views on whether or not this was a positive trend were mixed, with some welcoming the new freedom, while others felt that new ways meant less respect for elders and for cultural values and traditions.

- Choose girls from a range of backgrounds
- You can identify potential respondents through snowballing, group discussions, or with the help of key informants

- *Why have your experiences been different? Did anyone support you in what you did? Did anyone oppose what you were doing? What have the consequences been? Did you have to make any difficult trade-offs or compromises? Looking back, would you have done anything differently?*

### Stage 2: Introduce the interview then conduct it

- Explain the purpose of the interview and adhere to ethical guidance (seeking verbal or written consent)
- Use the pre-prepared questions, starting with a life history approach:
  - *Tell me about your life and how you got to where you are today? Are your experiences typical of other girls in your community, or different?*

Click [here](#) to see the questions used in outlier case studies.

### Box 11: How outlier case studies can reveal forces that support (or prevent) changes in gender norms

\*Ly Thi My is an ‘outlier’ in her community, in that her experience is quite different from other girls’ experiences. She is a 27-year-old married mother of one. Her life history so far shows what intelligence and hard work can do for a Hmong woman. But it also shows the limits of what individuals can achieve in the face of sticky norms.

My’s adolescence was much like that of her peers. She left school at the end of 9th grade and was shortly thereafter kidnapped by her husband. She, like the other kidnapped wives in our research, ‘*didn’t dare to return home*’ as she knew that her neighbours would see her as already married (and thus unmarriageable) if she left.

When her husband left home for an extended period of time, after promising her that he would shortly return, she tried to return to her mother, who ‘*let me stay there, but didn’t hold any ritual of any kind, which meant that she didn’t allow my soul to be admitted back to her family.*’ Indeed, My reported, ‘*When I helped my mother to work on the field, she said, “Go to your husband’s house. If you stay here, even if you work for me, I won’t calculate your contribution.”*’ She continued, ‘*I was so angry at her speech, I went to his home that evening.*’

Eventually, because she was judged to be clever and good with the Kinh language, My was invited by the commune to finish 12th grade at the Continuing Education Centre.

She is now employed in several official capacities (some of which are elected, others appointed), and has an enviable income of her own. She has used that income to put her husband, who also left school after lower secondary school, through both upper secondary school and college. She said, ‘*I calculated that 700,000 dong was enough for me and the child to eat. I allocated my monthly salary for him to study.*’ Her husband, however, used his time away from her to do more than study. My explained, ‘*He took many photographs with his girlfriends.*’

On the one hand, My shows what a Hmong woman can achieve when she is determined, unafraid of scandal and willing to work very hard. When her husband scolded her for working late, she told him, ‘*I couldn’t go home when I hadn’t fulfilled my task, because I was elected by people. Why did they elect me? Did they elect me so that I evaded my duty? I would be a waste of public money.*’ When he continued, she dared to point out, ‘*Ok, you can scold me because I am an official. I will find a job for you and later I will repeat the same sentence to you, let you see how humiliated you will feel.*’

On the other hand, My’s words provoke her husband and she, like many of her peers, is ultimately forced into submission. She explained, ‘*Frankly, if he raises his hand intending to beat, it is my fault when I am inattentive and speak too much.*’

My is still full of dreams, but she keeps them to herself. She told our research team, ‘*You are the first one who I told my dream, I haven’t told anyone else. Because I think that if my dream is possible to come true, I will tell other people. Unsympathetic people may say that “The kind of people like you dares to dream, you swimming upstream”. I will feel humiliated, so I don’t want to tell anybody.*’

\* *Names are pseudonyms to protect respondents’ identities*

## Resources

### ODI outputs

Samuels, F. and Jones, N. (2014) *Methods and Processes for Researching Politically and Culturally Sensitive Issues: Learning from a Multi-Country Study on Adolescent Girls and Social Norms*. This research note presents learning from ODI's study of how social norms discriminate against girls. It offers guidance on developing and implementing studies that explore culturally and politically sensitive issues. It highlights the importance of managing gatekeepers such as government service providers, by liaising with more than one (and with different kinds of gatekeepers), as well as carefully explaining the purpose of the fieldwork and selecting respondents randomly. It also recommends engaging stakeholders from many different levels in the data analysis process, to help test emerging ideas and promote ownership over potentially sensitive findings.

Laws, S., Harper, C., Jones, N. and Marcus, R. (2013) *Research for Development: A Practical Guide*. Second Edition. London: Sage Publications Inc. This comprehensive guide to commissioning, managing and undertaking research in development provides an overview of the research process, including the uses and planning of research, reviewing evidence, choosing research methods, undertaking ethical research and promoting research uptake, and assessing research. It draws on international case studies and has checklists of key points, as well as learning exercises and references for further reading.

### Guidance on how to involve children and adolescents in research

Girl Hub (2013a) *Girl Consultation Research Toolkit*. In a very user-friendly format, this toolkit explains how to identify research questions, how to recruit girl participants (and which girls to consult with), how to select and train consultation moderators, and sets out the practicalities of organising consultative workshops. It includes a range of activities to ensure that sessions are a safe and fun space for girls, with exercises designed to empower girls to articulate their thoughts and think creatively.

Girl Hub (2013b) *The Insights Toolkit: Practical Notes for Working with Girls in Poverty*. The Nike Foundation has developed this accessible guide drawing on more than eight years' work with girls. It outlines the Discover, Insights, Generate (DIG) process, which has been developed to help understand issues from girls' perspectives. For each stage of the DIG process, it guides the reader step-by-step through a series of qualitative tools that include social network mapping, diaries and storytelling.

Graham, A., Powell, M., Taylor, N., Anderson, D. and Fitzgerald, R. (2013) *Ethical Research Involving Children*. Florence: Innocenti Office of Research. This report reviews guidelines on research with children and young people, highlighting key points on topics such as the harms and benefits of research, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, and payment and compensation. It includes an annotated bibliography of documentation on research ethics from a wide range of organisations.

Laws, S. and Mann, G. (2004) *So You Want to Involve Children in Research? A Toolkit supporting Children's Meaningful and Ethical Participation in Research relating to Violence against Children*. Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden. This toolkit (one of a series produced by the International Save the Children Alliance) provides guidance on how to ensure children's meaningful and ethical participation in primary and secondary research, focusing on issues of violence against children. It draws on case studies from around the world to show how participatory research can enable children to be active agents in their own lives rather than passive research 'subjects'. It sets out different ways of approaching this work, discusses the ethical issues to be considered, and provides techniques that can be used effectively.

Morrow, V. (2009) *The Ethics of Social Research with Children and Families in Young Lives: Practical Experiences*. Working Paper No. 53. Oxford: Young Lives. This paper outlines the approach taken to research ethics by Young Lives – a longitudinal study of childhood poverty in four developing countries, including cohorts of adolescent girls. It describes the challenges encountered during fieldwork, highlighting issues related to informed consent, participants' expectations, child protection, and managing long-term relationships in research. It emphasises the importance of understanding local contexts when undertaking research with children and families, particularly in dynamic and rapidly changing environments.

Prelis, L. and Delomez, H. (n.d.) *Listening and Learning Toolkit*. Washington DC: Search for Common Ground. This toolkit explores the listening and learning (L&L) method – an innovative approach (grounded in participatory action research), which essentially involves guided conversations. The aim is to use conversations to capture individual perspectives and experiences. The toolkit includes tips on how to ensure that research processes are youth-led. There is also guidance on project preparation, partnership building, logistical planning, facilitation, and analysis and writing up of findings, with templates for recording field notes.

Save the Children Norway (2008) *A Kit of Tools for Participatory Research and Evaluation with Children, Young People and Adults*. Oslo: Save the Children Norway. This toolkit aims to assist participatory and reflective research and evaluation with children and young people. It is based on Save the Children Norway's two-year thematic evaluation of children's participation in armed conflict, post conflict and peacebuilding in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Guatemala, Nepal and Uganda (2006-2008). It includes accessible tools for sharing child-friendly information about the research process. The evaluation relied heavily on the Formative Dialogue Research approach (which relies on dialogue, reflection and critical thinking), allowing children to be actively involved as advisors, peer researchers, active respondents, development workers, peace agents and documenters.

Schenk, K. and Williamson, J. (2005) *Ethical Approaches to Gathering Information from Children and Adolescents in International Settings: Guidelines and Resources*. Washington DC: Population Council. This handbook provides guidance on the various ethical issues involved in collecting information from and about children and young people. It is the result of an international consultative process among experts in psychology, child development, sociology, anthropology, ethics, medicine and social work, and is intended to guide anyone who plans, manages, implements, analyses or funds programmes or research for or with children and adolescents. It explores key issues around children's participation, legal and professional requirements, and cultural and gender considerations, and has a section on working with especially vulnerable children. It is not a methodological handbook though; it presents issues in order to explore a range of responses, and to promote discussion and collaboration among people who address those issues from different perspectives.

Shaw, C., Brady, L.-M. and Davey, C. (2011) *Guidelines for Research with Children and Young People*. London: National Children's Bureau. Drawing on examples from the National Children's Bureau Research Centre, this report provides practical guidance for researchers on all aspects of the research process, from planning through to dissemination. It suggests ways to involve children and young people in research, either as participants or in more active roles (e.g. as collaborators) so that they can 'own' the process. It also explores practical issues around conducting research with young people, including getting access and dealing with 'gatekeepers'.

### Other literature

Bicchieri, C., Lindemans, J. and Jiang, T. (2014) 'A structured approach to a diagnostic of collective practices', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5 December.

Hoffman, L.W. and Kloska, D.D. (1995) 'Parents' gender-based attitudes toward marital roles and child rearing: development and validation of new measures', *Sex Roles* 32(5-6): 273-295.

Mackie, G., Moneti, F., Denny, E. and Shakya, H. (2012) *What are Social Norms? How are they Measured?* University of California at San Diego-UNICEF Working Paper, San Diego.

Pulerwitz, J. and Barker, G. (2008) 'Measuring attitudes toward gender norms among young men in Brazil: development and psychometric evaluation of the GEM scale', *Men and Masculinities* 10(3): 322-328.



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