



# The law as a tool for changing gender norms affecting adolescent girls

## The case of child marriage laws

September 2015



**Knowledge to action:**  
Effective action on  
gender norms that  
affect adolescent girls



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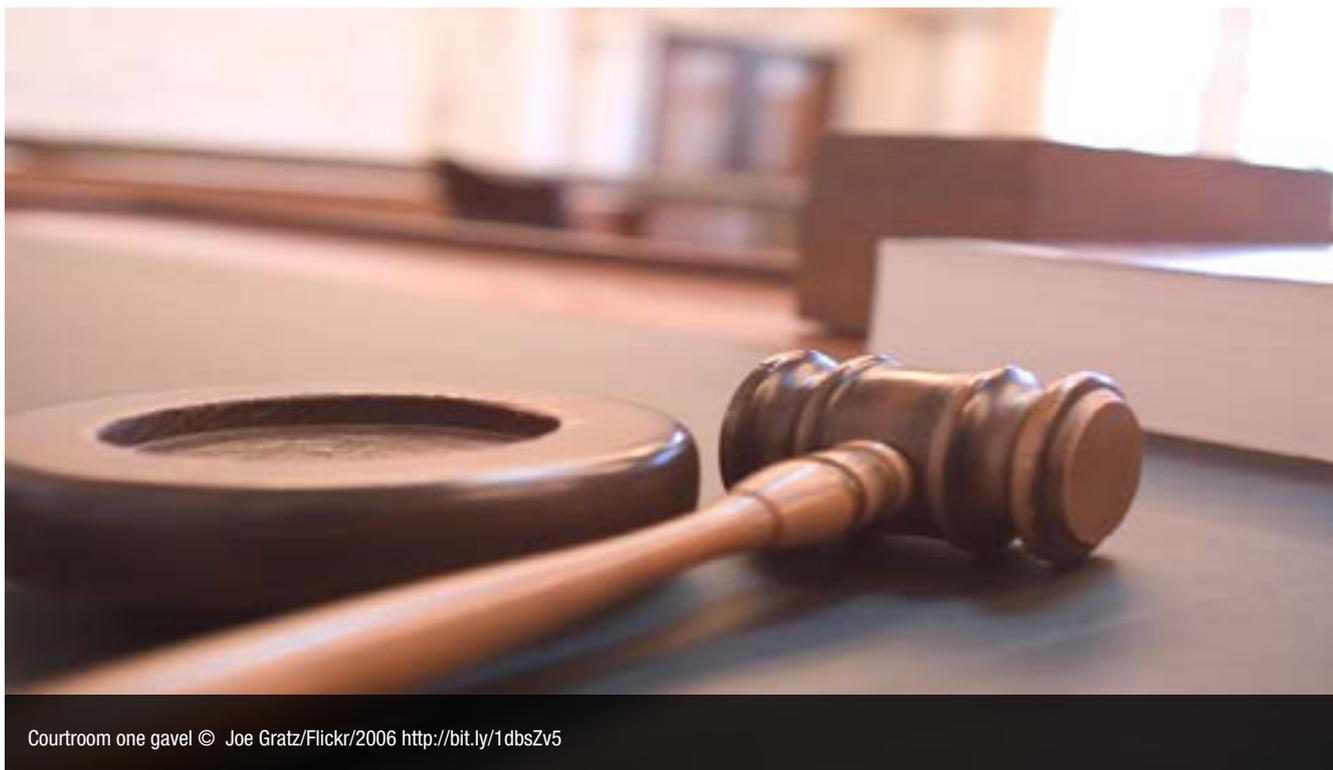
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### Key points

- Law reform is most effective in changing gender norms when it builds on changes in behaviour or attitudes that are already starting to occur. It can help people defy deep-rooted norms, help shape new norms (such as universal school attendance) and set standards against which actors can be held to account.
- For reforms to have maximum impact (for instance, as a deterrent to child marriage), there needs to be widespread awareness of new laws and public confidence that they will be enforced. This in turn depends on having well-functioning justice systems and local officials capable of and committed to enforcing new laws, especially where they go against existing norms.
- If law-based strategies are to play a major role in changing gender norms, reforms must tackle corruption, increase public confidence in the justice and legal system, and increase local enforcement capacity, while ensuring regular monitoring in the initial stages. Officials often cover large geographical areas (especially in rural communities) but lack transport, so are unable to intervene when they receive reports of planned child marriages. Civil society organisations could be given responsibility for enforcing child marriage laws in places which officials cannot reach.
- Legal reforms need to be accompanied by education and awareness-raising to explain and build consensus about the benefits they bring. Campaigns also need to target local officials responsible for law enforcement and implementing laws, as well as community leaders and the broader population. They should ensure that girls and boys and their parents know how to report breaches of the law.
- Where norms underpinning child marriage and other practices are strong, robust law enforcement may simply drive the practice underground. People have found creative ways to flout the law, including using false identity papers, and conducting ceremonies at night when officials cannot intervene. This suggests the need for greater sensitisation at the community level with girls, boys, parents, teachers and community leaders.

## Setting the scene

Gender equality campaigners often campaign for changes in national laws to prohibit discriminatory or harmful gender norms and practices. But the law has a very mixed record as a tool for change. This Research and Practice Note explores the circumstances in which implementation of legal reforms can make a strong contribution to changing gender norms and practices, with a focus on laws prohibiting child marriage. It also looks at the factors that undermine the effectiveness of legal reform as a tool for change. We draw on insights from fieldwork in Ethiopia, Nepal, Uganda and Viet Nam. The Resources section outlines key publications and sources of information on the issues discussed below.

## Legal context in our four research countries

Over the past two decades, Ethiopia, Nepal, Uganda and Viet Nam have taken significant steps to prevent child marriage through a combination of laws on the minimum age at marriage, and education (see Box 1).

## Factors that help or hinder the law as a tool for changing gender norms

Our research suggests that the law is most likely to contribute to progressive change in norms around child marriage under certain conditions. Public awareness and acceptance of the law, and enforcement capacity, are among the most important factors.

### In terms of public awareness and acceptance of the law, the law is most likely to contribute to changes in gender norms...

- **When there is broad public awareness and acceptance of the law and of the penalties for breaking it.** New laws and proposed reforms can be publicised through the media and community structures such as village meetings, and government services such as schools and clinics (see Box 2). Demographic and health surveys from Ethiopia suggest that the introduction of the Family Code (2000) and Penal Code (2005) may have influenced attitudes and practices on age of marriage and violence against women and girls (Tefera et al., 2013). Where children learn about the law in school, they can share this knowledge with their parents, as boys in Hmong communities in Viet Nam testified: ‘We have learnt about the law on child marriage, so we can persuade parents’ (Jones et al., 2015a).

### Box 1: Legal context (age at marriage, and education)

#### Ethiopia

- Ethiopia’s Family Code was revised in 2000, as was the Penal Code in 2005, to make marriage and divorce procedures more egalitarian. The revised Federal Family Code sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both sexes and illegalises betrothal, which would lead to the creation of an alliance between families when children are young.
- Primary education is compulsory for all children; pre-primary and secondary education are not compulsory. *(Tefera et al., 2013)*

#### Nepal

- The Eleventh Amendment to Nepal’s Country Code (which outlines criminal offences and penalties) states that individuals can marry at age 18 with parental consent, and at age 20 without consent.
- All primary education and lower secondary education (i.e. grades 1 to 8) is compulsory. *(Ghimire and Samuels, 2014)*

#### Uganda

- The Constitution and Uganda Penal Code establish the minimum age for marriage as 18 years.
- The 2008 Education Act (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post-Primary) provides for access to education for all. *(Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2014; Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2015)*

#### Viet Nam

- Viet Nam’s Marriage and Family Law (2000) prohibits girls under the age of 18 and boys under the age of 20 from marrying, and prohibits marriage by abduction.
- The Law on Universal Primary Education (1991) makes primary education compulsory for all children aged 6 to 14. *(Jones et al., 2014a; Jones et al., 2015a; UNESCO, 2011)*

## Box 2: Efforts to promote awareness of child marriage laws in Dembashi and Bulbullo, Ethiopia

Due to the efforts of health workers, Women Association leaders and school directors in raising people's awareness that the law prohibits children under 18 from marrying, there is increasingly widespread knowledge of the legal penalty for breaking the law.

People are now less likely to listen to elders on issues of marriage, paying heed to the law instead. *Kebele* (community) meetings educate people about the risks of early marriage, while teachers encourage parents to send their children to school and follow up girls who drop out.

In Bulbullo, *kebele* officials only approve a marriage once they have received written confirmation of the age of the partners from physicians and the *woreda* (district) Justice Department.

In an attempt to stop the secret marriages that are still occurring, teachers and *kebele* officials follow up cases of girls who stop going to school, pressuring parents to send the girls back (or else face a fine).

*Source: Jones et al., 2014b*

- **Where officials are prepared to implement the law, even at risk of criticism within their communities.** Our research and the wider literature (ICRW, 2011) suggest that where officials are not afraid to intervene to prevent child marriages or to punish offenders, this quickly sends a strong signal that the law 'has teeth'.
- **When girls are aware of the law and turn to it if their rights are threatened.** Only if girls are aware of laws intended to protect them can they use that knowledge (for instance, to resist a proposed marriage). In Ethiopia, for example, some girls who had learnt about the legal age of marriage in school-based girls' clubs used this knowledge to talk to their parents to resist an unwanted marriage; others told teachers or local officials who then intervened to stop the planned marriage. In Nepal, some girls' club members informed the police, who intervened to stop planned child marriages.
- **When laws are perceived to be broadly consistent with cultural values and norms, while staying 'one step ahead'.** Research suggests that law reforms and law enforcement can be more acceptable to people if they are broadly consistent with cultural values, or with emerging ideas (Bicchieri and Mercier, 2014). But to actively drive norm change, laws must be one step ahead and push change further (Shell-Duncan et al., 2013). Laws can also help to establish new norms, such as all children attending school.
- **When other social institutions are supportive of the new law.** In Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia, for example, efforts to change norms and practices related to age at marriage through legal reform were given a strong boost when the Orthodox Church gave its support to the government's position of delaying marriage until at least the age of 18 (Jones et al., 2014b). However, representatives of powerful institutions such as the Church need to be seen to comply with new laws. If not, they can undermine the law and influence people to disregard it. Our research in Nepal found that mothers' groups played an active role in bringing officials' attention to cases of domestic violence and could potentially play a similar role in cases of child marriage.
- **When penalties are sufficient to act as a deterrent.** Summarising the extensive literature on criminal penalties as deterrents is outside the scope of this Research and Practice Note. However, our research in Ha Giang province, Viet Nam, found evidence that where people believed fines would be levied, or they would have to do public works as a punishment, this acted as a deterrent to child marriage. One Hmong mother reported that since fines had been imposed '*people are afraid of the fines, so they send their children to school fully and regularly*'. A father taking part in a focus group discussion explained that while the fine itself was a deterrent, the shame of being fined was just as much of a deterrent: '*If we're punished, we'll be very embarrassed*' (Jones et al., 2015a). Conversely, where fines were relatively small or people perceived they would not be levied, the deterrent effect was much lower (Jones et al., 2014a).
- **... but not so severe as to drive practices underground or encourage officials to ignore violations.** Our research in Uganda's Mayuge district found that implementation of the law on age at marriage was complicated by the law on defilement, which criminalises all sex with or between minors (those under 18). People were reluctant to report violations of the marriage age law because of the risk of severe penalties associated with the defilement law (Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2014). In  
*'What I know is that sometimes the government bodies takes the married couples to police station and imprison them for two or three days. Then they release them and they continue to live together.'*  
*Married girl, Amhara state, Ethiopia*  
*(Jones et al., 2015b)*

Ha Giang province, Viet Nam, some people were simply not registering child marriages, but the couples involved were cohabiting, only registering the marriage when both had turned 18 (Jones et al., 2014a).

### In terms of implementation and enforcement capacity, laws on child marriage are most likely to contribute to changes in gender norms...

- **When the local state is strong and officials are present and willing to prevent or respond to violations of the law.** Our research suggests that laws on child marriage and compulsory education have had greater impacts in parts of Ethiopia, Nepal and Viet Nam where the local state has a relatively strong presence. Among Hmong communities in northern Viet Nam, villages with state representatives present or living nearby successfully eradicated child marriage in just a few years (mostly through issuing fines and returning girls to their natal homes). But officials have only limited access to more remote villages, weakening the state's capacity to enforce the law. As a result, child marriages often take place in these communities before officials hear of them (Jones et al., 2014a). Other forums created by non-government organisations (such as the child protection boards established by Plan International in some communities in northern Viet Nam) can bolster state capacity (see Box 3).
- **When local authorities are empowered to pass locally relevant by-laws to enact national laws and policies.** Compared with national law-making processes, local authorities often have greater scope to effect legal changes through passing by-laws. In Uganda, local by-laws in Mayuge district prohibit child labour and

#### Box 3: Child protection board upholding child marriage law in northern Viet Nam

Two of our respondents shared a story about child marriage. One was Mai, a 16-year-old girl who had nearly been married, and the other was Mrs Vu, her intended mother-in-law.

Mrs Vu reported that her son kidnapped Mai while she was 'hanging around'. She added, 'I didn't want them to get married, but he kidnapped her and brought her home, so I was unable to do anything.' The very next day, 'the child protection board intervened... The commune and hamlet officers came and... we were invited to sign on a commitment paper', promising to return Mai to her family and keep their son from marrying too young. Now Mai is studying at school.

Source: Jones et al., 2015a

levy penalties such as community service for parents who don't send their children to school. Similarly, in one study site in Viet Nam, village regulations include fines to penalise child marriage. Other locally imposed penalties for breaking the marriage law include an obligation on parents to build infrastructure to benefit the community, such as dams (Jones et al., 2015a).

- **When multiple state representatives are aware of the law and empowered to act.** For example, in two study sites in Ethiopia (Kelala and Kobo, in North and South Wollo respectively), teachers and local officials have the power to visit families if they hear of a planned marriage or if the girl is at risk of dropping out of school. In such cases, they try to persuade the parents to abandon the marriage and/ or let the girl return to school (Tefera et al., 2013). Similarly, health workers in some study sites (including in Dembashi, Ethiopia) play a key role in advising girls against child marriage as part of maternal and infant mortality prevention efforts (Jones et al., 2014b).
- **When monitoring systems are robust and sustained.** Without strong monitoring systems, discriminatory practices may subside initially when a new law is brought in, only to resurface again after a short while. For example, during a focus group discussion with girls in Metema, Ethiopia, one girl commented: 'There was serious supervision on early marriage by the school and government offices. As a result, the practice was abandoned. However, there has been no more supervision over the past two years because the government believed that the attitude of the society had changed towards early marriage' (Jones et al., 2014b).
- **When those enforcing the law are perceived to be trustworthy and not corrupt.** Lack of confidence that the law will be applied fairly (if at all) can seriously undermine its potential to change gender norms. If people's experience of the state is one of aggressive or corrupt behaviour, this can undermine confidence in the substance of new laws. This leads to a situation whereby people's motivation is to avoid contact with the police and the justice system (Domingo and O'Neil, 2014). While in some cases this will mean compliance with the law, in others it may increase people's determination to hide rather than discontinue illegal practices.
- **When there is a supportive, 'joined-up' institutional environment.** Just as compulsory education laws are likely to be ignored if people perceive the schooling on offer as of very poor quality, child marriage laws are more likely to be complied with if young people and their parents perceive that there are viable education or job alternatives. The 'infrastructure' to support child marriage laws (such as birth certification and/ or

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*'The Justice Office asks for witnesses when the issue is reported to them. Even the Justice Office workers do not want to investigate the case. The police also do not want to go into detail and find witnesses. The court needs eyewitnesses in order to take action on those who involve in the process of early marriage. The people try to hide the witnesses. As a result, the court releases the imprisoned people. As there is no legal protection mechanism for the witnesses, people do not want to appear at the court to give witness. They fear for their safety. There is a possibility that they may be attacked after they give witness... Even the teachers and other school staff start to fear for their life, as there is no legal protection for them. Teachers are under threat for trying to report the early marriage cases to the legal bodies. However, no one can try to protect them when they are threatened.'*

*Women's Association Chair, Amhara state, Ethiopia (Jones et al., 2015b)*

identity cards) must be in place to deter people from breaking the law – for instance, when parents and their children simply lie about the child's age (Ball Cooper and Fletcher, 2013).

### **Public acceptance and implementation of child marriage laws is particularly difficult...**

- **When there is a lack of capacity locally to respond to reports of potential or actual law violations.** In many low-income countries, there are simply too few police or local officials with the power to investigate and act on breaches of child marriage law. Many violations therefore go undetected. Law enforcers often lack transport and are unable to investigate reports of child marriage in remote areas (Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2014; Plan, 2014).
- **When local officials are unwilling to enforce the law.** Officials charged with enforcing laws can be reluctant to do so. In both eastern Uganda, and Amhara state (Ethiopia), officials had neglected to implement child marriage laws either because they disagreed with them or did not want to undermine their position in the community. Our research in Amhara and in northern Viet Nam found that the deterrent effect of the law depended partly on perceptions of how likely particular officials were to enforce it.
- **When people perceive officials and the justice system as corrupt.** Corruption significantly undermines confidence in the legal system, and can lead to people bringing charges in order to get a cut of a bribe, or paying police and officials to 'turn a blind eye'. In such contexts, the law is unlikely to function as a vehicle for changing gender norms, but rather as a source of further injustice for poor people. There can be specific gender dimensions

*'There are so many cases where we didn't register our marriage. Nobody said anything, we were not fined.'*  
*15-year-old married Hmong girl, Viet Nam*  
*(Jones et al., 2014a)*

– for example, as one key informant in Uganda put it, *'If an [under-aged] daughter gets pregnant, parents will take the case to the police, but the police urge them to negotiate so they can also get a cut of the settlement. So two parties are benefiting: the police and the girl's parents'* (Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2014).

- **When the justice system is inaccessible and unaffordable.** Most poor people cannot afford to pay legal costs to pursue a case. As a result, violations of girls' rights are often resolved through customary mechanisms, which can serve to perpetuate discrimination (such as when a girl who has been raped is pressured into marrying the perpetrator).
- **When people fear the repercussions of bringing a case or acting as a witness.** Our research in Ethiopia found that people in some communities were reluctant to testify against family or community members involved in arranging child marriages. Not only did people want to maintain cordial family relationships, they also feared violence if they testified against other community members. (Jones et al., 2015b).

### **So is legal reform worth pursuing as a vehicle for achieving gender norm change?**

Despite the potential of legal reforms to bring about gender equality and drive progressive changes in gender norms, the reality does not always live up to the hopes and expectations of activists who have mobilised for change. Reasons for this include the following:

- **The risk of a backlash.** A degree of resistance is inevitable, because gender equality laws usually challenge established interests and cultural or religious values or confront harsh socioeconomic realities. Conservative interests frequently try to water down or block reforms or new laws promoting gender equality (Jones et al., 2010; Pedersen et al., 2008; Amuchástegui et al., 2010). In some cases, powerful groups have even tried to lower the minimum marriage age (Equality Now, 2014).

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- **Contradictions or discrepancies between national laws and local customary or religious laws.** In many countries, there are multiple systems of law in operation. Constitutional or national-level rights to gender equality coexist with traditional or religious law systems covering family issues – and the two are often contradictory. In rural areas, people are often unaware of formal laws, instead conducting their affairs according to customary laws enforced by traditional leaders.

Despite these challenges, our fieldwork and the literature reviewed suggest that legal reform remains an effective route for promoting gender norm change, particularly when sufficient resources are dedicated to implementing reforms and when they are complemented by other approaches. These include the following:

- **Promoting public acceptance of gender equality laws.** It is vital to engage community and traditional leaders and the public at large in local and national processes of dialogue and debate, using the media, public services and village-based groups. People need to understand new laws and the penalties for breaking them; different approaches may be needed for different groups in different areas. This work is important to increase public ‘ownership’ of new laws and reduce resistance to particularly contentious legal changes.
- **Targeting adolescent girls and boys and other family members.** Giving girls information about their legal rights can empower them to protect themselves. Educating boys can help ensure that in their future roles as husbands and fathers, they respect the rights of women and girls in their family.
- **Strengthening law enforcement capacity, particularly at local level.** Depending on the context, this might involve employing more police or justice officials and sensitising them to gender issues so that they can pursue violations of girls’ rights. Or it might involve making the criminal justice system more ‘user-friendly’ and ‘adolescent-friendly’ by training or sensitising local officials to gender issues.
- **Promoting the rule of law** so that the legal and justice systems are perceived as being effective, impartially applied, and not subject to corruption or non-implementation when they are out of step with discriminatory norms.
- **Promoting a ‘joined-up’ approach between local administrations, the justice system and service providers.** Laws prohibiting child marriage, for example, require effective birth registration systems to be in place and accessible to local officials so that people trying to flout the law cannot falsify identity documents.
- **Addressing underlying economic and institutional reasons for the violation of specific laws.** Poverty and lack of educational or employment opportunities are among other key factors that reinforce child marriage, even where it is illegal and there are campaigns to eradicate it.

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## Resources

### ODI Programme outputs

Kyomuhendo Bantebya, G., Muhanguzi, K.F. and Watson, C. (2015). *'This is not the work of a day': Communications for Social Norm Change around Early Marriage and Education for Adolescent Girls in Uganda*. This report outlines Uganda's national policy and legislative framework, identifying laws and policies intended to change discriminatory gender norms affecting adolescent girls. It reviews three programmes that aim to empower girls in Uganda. One of the programmes reviewed, ANPPCAN has a partial focus on strengthening implementation of child protection laws and policies, through a combination of capacity building work with the child protection and justice systems and raising awareness of children's rights. It focuses particularly on orphans and other vulnerable children, including girl mothers, and support to children whose protection rights have been violated. The report outlines some challenges to implementation of child protection and gender equality laws.

Kyomuhendo Bantebya, G., Muhanguzi, K.F. and Watson, C. (2014) *Adolescent Girls in the Balance: Changes and Continuity in Social Norms and Practices around Marriage and Education in Uganda*. This report looks at the norms that underpin child marriage and the factors that have contributed to change. It outlines some of the challenges in implementing protective legislation, such as weak local government capacity, strong economic drivers of child marriage and gender norms that encourage child marriage and childbearing. The report highlights a backlash against pro-gender equality law reforms.

Jones, N., Presler-Marshall, E., Tran, T.V.A., Thuy, D., Le, D. and Thao, N. (2015a) *'You must be bold enough to tell your own story': Programming to Empower Viet Nam's Hmong Girls*. This report sets out Viet Nam's legal framework for gender equality. It explores the power of girls' clubs and other programmes informing children about their rights, targeting teachers, girls and boys, and their families. The report also discusses the challenges to effective local implementation of the age of marriage law and the impact this has on adolescent girls.

Jones, N., Tefera, B., Gebre, B. and Berhanu, K. (2015b) *'Now I can propose ideas that can solve any problem': The Strengths and Weaknesses of Community Awareness Interventions in Ending Child Marriage and Empowering Adolescent Girls in Amhara Regional State in Ethiopia*. This report outlines Ethiopia's policies and laws for gender equality. It discusses challenges to effective implementation of child marriage laws, such as when they clash with local norms surrounding the appropriate age of marriage. It also looks at economic drivers of child marriage and logistical challenges to implementing the law, such as the difficulty of obtaining witnesses to testify against family or community members. It emphasises the importance of meaningful alternatives for adolescent girls, such as accessible, affordable, good-quality education and learning vocational skills.

Jones, N., Presler-Marshall, E. and Tran, T.V.A. (2014a). *Early Marriage among Viet Nam's Hmong: How Unevenly Changing Gender Norms limit Hmong Adolescent Girls' Options in Marriage and Life*. Drawing on fieldwork in northern Viet Nam, this report outlines challenges in implementing the law on child marriage. It highlights the surprising finding that many girls are now marrying younger (despite this being illegal and much government messaging about the value of delaying marriage until adulthood). It discusses the factors that encourage compliance with the law and those that work against it.

Jones, N., Tefera, B., Stephenson, J., Gupta, T., Perezniето, P., Emirie, G., Gebre, B. and Gezhagne, K. (2014b) *Early Marriage and Education: The Complex Role of Social Norms in shaping Ethiopian Adolescent Girls' Lives*. This report identifies factors underpinning changes in gender norms around child marriage and education. It discusses examples of girls using their knowledge of the law to prevent proposed marriages and explores the limitations of the law as a tool for change.

### Other key literature

Bicchieri, C. and Mercier, H. (2014) *'Norms and beliefs: how change occurs' in B. Edmonds (ed.), The dynamic view of norms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. The authors argue that the conditions under which laws will bring about social norm change include legitimacy, procedural fairness, and how the law is originated and enforced. They suggest that if laws are too distant from prevailing social norms, the public will not respect them and will not stigmatise individuals who violate the law.

Boyden, J., Pankhurst, A. and Tafere, Y. (2013) *Harmful Traditional Practices and Child Protection: Contested Understandings and Practices of Female Child Marriage and Circumcision in Ethiopia*. Oxford: Young Lives. This report examines the cultural rationale underlying female genital cutting/mutilation (FGM/C) and child marriage in parts of Ethiopia, and the impact of laws to ban FGM/C and other harmful practices. Drawing on Young Lives research, it concludes that while eradication efforts have been somewhat effective, they have generated resistance and as a result, some practices have been driven underground. In some cases, uncircumcised girls are reported to have arranged to be circumcised in order to avoid stigma from their peers and to prevent their parents facing criminal charges.

Equality Now (2014) *Protecting the Girl Child: Using the Law to End Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Related Human Rights Violations*. New York: Equality Now. This report discusses the potential of national, international, religious and customary law for protecting girls from child marriage, with case studies from 12 countries, highlighting instances where legal change is needed. It imagines a world where girls have access to supportive services and protective legislation. It outlines tailored policy recommendations for each case study country.

Equality Now Adolescent Girls' Legal Defense Fund (2012) *Learning from Cases of Girls' Rights*. New York: Equality Now. This report provides detailed guidance on how justice systems can be made more girl-friendly. It has specific recommendations for addressing cases of sexual violence through the legal system, and presents adolescent girls' experiences with the legal system in different countries.

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) (2011) *Delaying Marriage for Girls in India: A Formative Research to Design Interventions for Changing Norms*. New Delhi: UNICEF. By examining the social norms and practices surrounding child marriage in the Indian states of Rajasthan and Bihar, this study proposes an actionable intervention strategy to delay marriage. The strategy is largely based on the role of education as a key catalyst for change.

Jones, N., Harper, C., Watson, C., Espey, J., Wadugodapitiya, D., Page, E., Stavropoulou, M., Presler-Marshall, E. and Clench, B. (2010) *Stemming Girls' Chronic Poverty: Catalysing Development Change by Building Just Social Institutions*. London: Chronic Poverty Research Centre. This report explains how social norms, beliefs and institutional barriers limit girls and young women, and provides programme and policy examples of ways of addressing these barriers. There is a detailed section on discriminatory family codes – one of five key social institutions the report identifies as undermining girls' developmental opportunities.

Plan International (2014) *The State of the World's Girls 2014. Pathways to Power: Creating Sustainable Change for Adolescent Girls*. Woking: Plan International. This report discusses the role of the state in providing a positive framework for the fulfilment of girls' rights, and outlines some of the obstacles to effective implementation of gender equality laws.

Shell-Duncan, B., Wander, K., Hernlund, Y. and Moreau, A. (2013) 'Legislating change? Responses to criminalizing female genital cutting in Senegal'. *Law and Society Review* 47(4): 803-835. This article examines responses in rural Senegal to the 1999 anti-female genital cutting (FGC) law. It explores the efficacy of new legislation in contexts where reforms run counter to social norms, and where FGC was already being contested. It concludes that legislation can complement other reform strategies by creating an 'enabling environment' that supports those who have abandoned or wish to abandon FGC. But such reforms can also lead to considerable resistance.

### Other works cited

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