

Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment



The issue

Progress towards gender equality is being made across the world, but it is widely variable and hard to advance at pace. Gender inequality continues to pervade; discriminatory gendered norms prevail and resistance to change is common. Women and girls still lack control over economic, social and political resources. Stark disparities remain between women, and between women and men, influenced by intersecting factors such as gender, age, disability, ethnicity and class.

- While more women are in work, this has not been matched by better employment conditions or equal pay.
- Unpaid care and domestic work restrict women's economic potential and can impose double workloads.
- Violence against women and girls is alarmingly prevalent.
- Disparities in educational access and attainment persist.
- Maternal mortality rates are considerably off target for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by diseases including HIV and AIDS.
- Women's say in decision-making – from formal political participation to decision-making roles in the private sector, public bureaucracies and the home – is limited.

Our approach

We provide independent research, evaluation, analysis and advice to inform policies and practices that advance gender justice.

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

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

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

Explore the full range of our work at odi.org/gender

Priority areas

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



Political and economic empowerment and leadership

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

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

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

Find out more



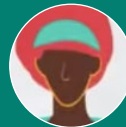
The norms factor: recent research on gender, social norms, and women's economic empowerment



Interventions promoting adolescent girls' economic capabilities: what works?



Women's voice and leadership: assessing the evidence



Women and the 'Uber-isation' of domestic work

Education

Education is at the heart of female empowerment. ODI identifies good practices and innovative approaches in education that enhance gender equality through areas as varied as reducing financial barriers, curriculum reform, teacher training and system-strengthening. Our analysis examines how formal and informal education contributes to girls' skills and wider agency, for example in life decisions such as marriage, and how education can better prepare young people for changing labour markets.

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

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

Find out more



Mitigating threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts



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



Girls' learning and empowerment: the role of school environments



Adolescents with disabilities: enhancing resilience and delivering inclusive development

Reducing risk and promoting gender-transformative humanitarian action

Conflicts and disasters of all kinds tend to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities and marginalisation. We document how crises influence gendered norms and power relations, and vice versa – how gender shapes experiences of violence, vulnerability and risk in crisis settings. Our research informs the design and implementation of inclusive humanitarian and resilience programming.

The experiences and perspectives of women and gender minorities – especially those facing multiple discriminations of poverty, racialisation, disability or sexuality – are rarely taken into account in humanitarian response. Women's organisations and movements for gender justice are therefore integral to resilience in crisis-affected communities.

Our growing body of work on gender-transformative humanitarian action and resilience aims to help make the case that knowledge about gender can bring about more inclusive policy and practice.

Find out more



Gender in displacement:
the state of play



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



Building resilience for all:
intersectional approaches for
reducing vulnerability to natural
hazards in Nepal and Kenya



The impact of displacement
on gender roles and
relations: the case of IDPs
from FATA, Pakistan



Health, psychosocial well-being and freedom from violence

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

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

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

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

Find out more



The Lancet series on gender equality, norms and health



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



Men and intimate partner violence: from research to action



Family, sexuality, and sexual and reproductive health in Cuba: the role of social norms

Gender norms and institutional change

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

ODI works to place discriminatory norms on the agenda, identifying where and how they are detrimental – from keeping girls out of school to excluding women from decision-making – and identifying solutions in political, civil, social, legal and economic structures, alongside measures to enhance personal efficacy and agency. We host the Advancing Learning and Innovation in Gender Norms (ALIGN) platform, which connects practitioners, policy-makers and researchers working to understand and find effective ways to change discriminatory norms, and acts as a hub for knowledge sharing.

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

Find out more



Transforming the world for girls: podcast series



Frequently asked questions about gender norms



Empowering adolescent girls in developing countries: gender justice and norm change



Knowledge to action resource series: adolescent girls and gender norms

odi.org/gender

Gender equality in development practice

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

ODI leads the longitudinal Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) study, which critically assesses programmes aimed at tackling discriminatory gender norms and practices and advancing the well-being of young people during the pivotal second decade of life. GAGE implements large-scale mixed methods research involving vulnerable adolescents in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

Recent systematic reviews have covered media approaches to address gender norm change, the efficacy of girls' clubs to promote empowerment and projects to promote positive masculinities for adolescent boys and young men.

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

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

Find out more



Programming with adolescent boys to promote gender-equitable masculinities



Qualitative research toolkit to explore child marriage dynamics and how to fast-track prevention



The politics of gender-responsive social protection



Gender-responsive public expenditure management

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Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE)

GAGE is the largest longitudinal research initiative on adolescents in low- and middle-income contexts. It follows 20,000 girls and boys aged 10–19 years in developing countries throughout their second decade of life.

GAGE generates evidence on ways to enable young people to move out of poverty and exclusion and reach their full capabilities, from education, health and economic empowerment, to psychosocial well-being, bodily integrity, and voice and agency.

The research findings are intended to support policy and programme actors to more effectively advance adolescents' well-being and meet the 2030 global commitments.

The GAGE consortium convenes 40 research, policy and programming partners globally. GAGE is funded by UK Aid.

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



Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms (ALIGN)

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

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

ALIGN is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Find out more alignplatform.org

Social protection

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

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

Find out more **Social protection, women's and girls' empowerment and gender equality**





Women on the bench

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

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

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

Find out more **Women on the bench: the role of female judges in fragile states**

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Find all of ODI's experts on gender at
odi.org/gender



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

Photos:

- Cover: Guinea: a rural women's cooperative. Photo: UN Women/Joe Saade.
- Page 4: Rwanda: girl dancing. Photo: Hanna Morris.
- Page 8: Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh: displaced Rohingya women attend a cyclone safety session organised by a community leader in Nayapara camp. Photo: UN Women/Allison Joyce.
- Page 12: Sierra Leone: woman farming. Photo: Annie Spratt.
- Page 13: Uganda: Faida, who campaigns against child marriage. Photo: UNICEF Uganda/Jimmy Adriko.
- Page 14: Rakhine State, Myanmar: women and children in the waiting room of a rural clinic. Photo: ICRC/Minzayar Oo.
- Page 15: Istanbul: Syrian refugees. Photo: Rostyslav Savchyn.
- Page 16: Guatemala: woman standing in front of her stall. Photo: Perry Grone.
- Page 18: Ecuador: women protest against gender-based violence. Photo: UN Women/Johis Alarcón.

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**Evidence.
Ideas.
Change.**