

Global Programme to End Child Marriage: WEBINAR SERIES

Session 3: Shifting Gender Norms Key takeaways

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Child Marriage and Social Norms

Nicola Jones (PhD), Principal Research Fellow, ODI and Director, Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE)

Social norms are constructed by individuals' beliefs about what others do and what others expect them to do. Gender norms dictate how girls and boys, and women and men, are expected to behave, and are particularly hard to change because they are invisible, pervasive and interwoven, with the practice of child marriage linked to a set of gender norms. These norms are different in different places, and they are reinforced by different factors. Eight important implications for programme design found through GAGE's research are: 1) the intersections of norms reinforcing child marriage is quite distinct – tailor messaging to child marriage specifically; 2) tailor interventions to the community-level, as norms are context-specific, and tailor messaging to the audience; 3) have ongoing monitoring and adaptive programming; 4) expand interventions to go beyond preventing child marriage to also support already married or divorced girls; 5) based on the context, consider multi-level interventions to address all drivers of child marriage; 6) ensure interventions are properly costed and budgeted for; 7) do not support unrealistic targets in national action plans unless they have secured necessary funding; and 8) invest in monitoring and also share failures for others to learn from.

Changing Gender Norms – Experiences and Lessons from South Asia

Ingrid Fitzgerald, Technical Adviser, Gender and Human Rights, UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office

Gender norms do not exist in a vacuum but are intervened with power relations and often invisible, with power being exercised through a repetition of the norms. Gender norms are specific to context and sticky. An explicit theory of change is needed, with multi-level interventions across the socioecological model, to enable a change in gender norms. Gender transformation happens when there is change at the level of structures, relations and the individual. Norm change on its own is not going to end child marriage, e.g. economic growth is also needed to create an enabling environment, why comprehensive approaches are most useful. One example of a comprehensive approach is the life skills programme *Rupantaran* in Nepal, which is part of a broader set of interventions to address gender transformation. It is important to engage men and boys, not only as power holders, but also in their own right. To avoid backlashes and unintended consequences it is important to work not only in one area or with only one type of intervention, but to have a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach. Gender norms change takes a long time – it cannot be achieved overnight or through the interventions of just one programme.

The Role of Education in Transforming Gender Norms

Ingrid Sanchez Tapia (PhD), Education Specialist, UNICEF HQ

Education as an institution has the power to change gender norms, but it can also perpetuate norms that hold back girls. We need interventions that address structural causes as well as the symptoms, e.g. scholarships for girls only give a positive impact on girls' enrolment for a specific number of girls for a specific period of time – a temporary increase in opportunities. It is important to not only develop policies for promoting gender equality, but to make sure they are also costed, funded and prioritized. Implementing a package of interventions is key, including interventions targeting girls, teachers and institutions. Learnings from India show the importance of engaging men and boys, while experience from Uganda shows that interventions to support girls' education do not automatically translate into change in gender norms, this needs targeted interventions over a long period of time. A multi-sectoral strategy to

reduce educational inequalities, violence and early pregnancies among indigenous adolescents in Peru highlights the importance of working with a comprehensive package of interventions and of regular monitoring. Some key do's and do not's are: work with teachers and how they interact with students; include adolescent girls in programme design; engage men and boys – boys need comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and life skills too; work with decision makers to make sure policies are funded and implemented; multi-sectoral interventions are key; create age- and sex-specific groups for CSE and life skills (make it context specific); do not leave adolescent education policies unbudgeted; and do not assume that by having female teachers gender norms will change automatically – they need to be trained too.

Q&A – some key points

Monitoring change in gender norms

- **Nicola Jones:** One method is to ask people to use vignettes to respond to different scenarios, to go beyond questions linked to knowledge and attitudes: work with homogenous groups not to silence any voices. Another method is to do sentinel sites monitoring in hotspot areas where norms are particularly strong, using qualitative in-depth approaches triangulated with quantitative data, e.g. school dropout and adolescent pregnancy.

Landscape for norms change interventions

- **Ingrid Fitzgerald:** There has been an increased push-back in communities and on a global level. We need to identify key stakeholders with power, through 'power mappings', to understand who benefits from current norms because they are often those who push back. It is important to work across sectors to address this, and it is important to remember that the push back might be loud – but it is not always representative of what is possible to do on the ground. Coordination between partners and interventions are key, to have the same messaging across.

Engaging men and boys

- **Ingrid Fitzgerald:** Often when we talk about engaging men and boys, we do it in the context of them supporting girls and women, but it is important to engage them in their own right. Promundo does a lot of work in this field. Evidence shows that men and boys also gain from gender equality, e.g. in health outcomes, life expectancy and happier relations.

Adolescent sexuality

- **Ingrid Fitzgerald:** Norms around adolescent sexuality are at the heart of child marriage: if we do not address them, we will not come very far as it is linked to e.g. chastity and violence. Much more accepted for boys and men to be sexually active.
- **Nicola Jones:** Norms around sexuality do not only impact girls, but in some contexts also boys with expectations on how they should behave, e.g. child marriage driven in contexts where sexual activity is not allowed outside of marriage.

Role of education and girls' clubs

- **Ingrid Sanchez Tapia:** Education can contribute to gender norms change, but not on its own, we need comprehensive interventions over time. Girls' clubs can be mainstreamed through the formal education system. On their own, when well-designed, they might be gender responsive, but not necessarily gender transformative as they may be hard to sustain for governments.
- **José Roberto Luna (UNFPA HQ):** In the Latin America and Caribbean region, there is more than 10 years of experience in working with girls' clubs, e.g. in Guatemala through the Population Council's Abriendo Oportunidades Programme. The programme has shown effectiveness, and the methods used are now also spreading to other countries, being contextualized and can support interventions focused on gender norms change.

Taking norms change to scale and working in humanitarian settings

- **Ingrid Fitzgerald:** Norms change interventions take time and are resource intensive. Hence, it can be hard to take it to scale. Especially since interventions also need to be targeted to a specific context, based on its specific drivers and norms (research is needed to understand the specific situation). When working in humanitarian settings we need to be realistic of the impact of gender norms, there might be other drivers for child marriage which are much stronger there.
- **Nicola Jones:** No need for a strong dichotomy between instrumentalist and gender transformative models; use large-scale social protection programmes for gender transformative interventions as change in behaviors can indeed lead to a change in norms, thus a good entry-point for going to scale. This is important, especially in humanitarian contexts, where there is a big need to create alternatives to child marriage and overcome economic hardships.

Costing of interventions for norms change

- **Satvika Chalasani (UNFPA HQ):** Costing of gender norms change is difficult, because it runs across all interventions we do.
- **Nicola Jones:** Little has been shared yet from different programmes on costing, as implementers are afraid it might affect funding. We should encourage all to be more transparent so that we can learn from effective interventions. GAGE has a study on costing in progress (not yet ready to be shared).

Feasibility of contextualize messaging

- **Nicola Jones:** Start with small-scale formative research in the specific community to create a pre-baseline. Without contextualization you might get the numbers but not the gender and norms transformation. However, this is indeed time and resource intensive.
- **Ingrid Fitzgerald:** It is also linked to the need of tailoring the package of interventions to the specific context.

Closing Remarks:

- **Helen Belachew (UNICEF HQ):** This webinar is part of a series of webinars on gender transformation. A technical note on gender transformation has been shared with the Global Programme country offices which will be followed by “tip sheets” on how to deliver gender transformative programs: shifting gender norms will be one theme.
- **Satvika Chalasani:** This webinar has underlined the importance of building agency for adolescent girls and the need for providing alternatives to girls, that it is important to address power relations and to understand a comprehensive approach to gender norms change, as well as to address drivers beyond social and behavior change. While gender norms change can be influenced through systems, it is also important to understand that the education system can reinforce unequal norms in the absence of a transformative approach.

Webinar resources:

- [Recording of the webinar](#)
- Presentations of [Nicola Jones](#), [Ingrid Fitzgerald](#), and [Ingrid Sanchez Tapia](#)