

OPEN PLAN

Research & Evaluation
Volume 6 | Issue 1 | September 2021



Bringing hearts and minds
together for children



*Girls at school where we are implementing
our MHM project in Kamuli district, Uganda.*
(© Plan International)

Using a mixed-methods approach in comprising both qualitative and quantitative methods, the first report analyses the Effects of Forced Labour and Trafficking in Persons on Female Relatives of Male Fishers in the Philippines. The study highlights potential ways for women to develop agency in the prevention, and protection against, forced labour and trafficking, helping to challenge deeply rooted gender norms, gender relationships, and the gendered nature of power relations found in fishing communities in the Philippines.

The second research report provides an overview of the Gender Financing Project which maps funding across three country case studies in Nepal, Kenya, and Guatemala. By addressing funding gaps and holding donors and partner governments accountable to their gender equality commitments this report seeks to improve gender equality by improving the publication of gender-related financial and programmatic data to better meet gender advocates needs.

The third article is a final evaluation report of the “A Bloody Serious Matter: Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)” project in Uganda. Collaboration and funding from the National Postcode Lottery and Plan Uganda’s Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) team, has resulted in significant impact on the communities and lives of the girls Plan works with. The evaluation examines the importance of Plan’s response to ensuring good access to menstrual hygiene products and information especially during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and presents an overview of the entire progress of the project since 1st of July 2014 until the 31st of December 2020. The sustainability of the activities, lessons learnt and how Plan seeks to implement even more MHM activities in other districts in Uganda and internationally is further explored.

Using a Male Engagement Policy Framework, the last article explores a report on the policy environment for male engagement in family planning across Bangladesh and Nepal. The Health Policy Plus (HP+) project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) highlights the policy implementation barriers and enablers that men and boys experience, and the importance of including adolescent boys in facilitating healthy reproductive knowledge and access to family planning services. Additionally, the role men play as acting as family planning clients, supportive partners, and agents of change is examined.

We hope you find this issue of OPENPlan insightful. Please contact the MERL team at Global Hub if you have any exciting research reports or evaluations that you would like to see featured in future editions!

EDITORIAL

Exploring research and evaluation pieces from across the organisation, this edition of OPENPlan brings to you a selection of diverse studies that showcase recent works from within the global Plan International family. Thematic focus in this edition includes combating forced labour and trafficking in persons, gender financing, the promotion of sexual health and women’s empowerment and the engagement of boys and men in family planning rights.

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EFFECTS OF FORCED LABOUR AND TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS ON FEMALE RELATIVES OF MALE FISHERS

Final report conducted by Plan International Philippines and Plan International USA's Safeguarding Against and Addressing Fishers Exploitation at Sea (SAFE Seas), authored by Dewi Ratnawulan and Daniel Lindgren, with analysis assistance from Boonsita Ravisopitying from Rapid Asia.

CONTEXT

The Philippines consists of a group of islands that contain a sea area about seven times larger than its land. Ranking 11th among the 80 fish-producing countries in the world, the fishing industry is a crucial sector within the Filipino economy. The economic dependency on fishing is magnified within the Sarangani Province and General Santos City (GenSan) of the Soccsksargen region, where the SAFE Seas project is being implemented and where the Pre-Situational Analysis was conducted. Three municipalities, including Kiamba, Glan and GenSan, were selected where fishers and their families are known to reside. Fishers and their families are at risk of experiencing exploitative practices due to the informality of the sector and due to a lack of alternative forms of employment based on their qualifications and skill level.



The gender divide within the fishing community is widely apparent as men are exclusively at sea for prolonged periods, whilst women predominantly work onshore managing their households.

The objectives of this study can be summarised as follows:

- 1 To assess women's awareness and knowledge of forced labour and trafficking in persons (FL/TIP) on fishing vessels
- 2 To explore women's experiences and coping strategies to deal with the impact of FL/TIP
- 3 To assess gender norms and gender relationships in the fishing community
- 4 To identify potential future roles for women and how women's agency can contribute to prevention and protection against FL/TIP.

Increased chances of Forced Labour/Trafficking in Persons (FL/TIP) are expected upon fishers and their families as depleting levels of tuna available in surrounding waters are forcing vessels to venture farther and farther out to maintain a profit. Fishers are exposed to increased involvement in illegal fishing due to harsher conditions, a lack of medical equipment, and longer working hours. All of which are breaches to the formal agreement of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Work in Fishing Convention (No. 188), that ensures all fishers are entitled to written terms and conditions of employment, decent accommodation and food, medical care, regulated working time, repatriation, social protection and health and safety onboard.

Additionally, gendered segregation places great burden onto fishers wives of not only managing their caregiver responsibilities but also of managing loans to ensure the survival of their households while their husbands are out at sea. Since those offering the loans are usually the boat owners, the burden of managing financial uncertainties results in wives being indebted to the husband's employer, proving detrimental to the level of protection and agency these women may receive.

In order to achieve decent work for all and the most basic human rights of freedom from FL/TIP on fishing vessels, it is necessary for women to exercise their presence on shore and to be more visible in advocating against exploitative practices. In response, the Filipino government has expressed a

strong commitment to combating FL/TIP through strict policies and law enforcement. This report suggests that due to these efforts, in 2015 the Philippines was removed from the European Union (EU) Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) watch list and in 2016, the Philippines improved its trafficking profile to Tier 1 meeting the minimum standard for eliminating TIP. Currently, the Philippines remains at this level and this report seeks to highlight the much-needed inclusion of women's roles, positions, experiences, and agency in combating FL/TIP on shore.

METHODOLOGY

This report employed a mixed-methods approach when collecting data, through the use of Computer-Aided Personal Interviewing (CAPI) systems, survey data, and computer tablets to record participants answers. A total of 210 women were interviewed and qualitative data was collected through 10 key informant interviews – seven women and three men – six focus group discussions – four female groups and two male groups – and 10 in-depth interviews with wives whose husbands were victims of FL/TIP. All data collection was conducted during February-March 2020.

Main Objectives of the study:

- To assess women's awareness and knowledge about FL/TIP on fishing vessels.
- To explore women's experiences and coping strategies.
- To understand how FL/TIP on fishing vessels affects women and their families wellbeing.
- To assess how gender norms and gender relations may influence women's responses to FL/TIP and their ability to increase anti-FL/TIP awareness in their communities.
- To identify potential future roles for women and how women's agency can contribute to prevention and protection against FL/TIP on fishing vessels.
- To identify potential barriers to women's agency.
- To contribute to enhancing knowledge of FL/TIP on fishing vessels.

Interviewers ensured that ethical considerations were met in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct by stating to all participants that interviews were voluntary and that all information and responses collected were confidential. The report ensured no information would be released if it would identify a participant. Additionally, a gender-sensitive approach was adopted by employing female interviewers to gather data. Measures were also taken to ensure that through the use of CAPI, all survey components, such as questionnaire design, managing, supervising, interviewing, data entry and validation, were collected into one loop where the data collection process was monitored.



Community members are trained on the importance of women's and children rights (Philippines).
(© Plan International)

KEY FINDINGS

To determine the extent to which Filipino women can be seen as agents of change in combating FL/TIP on fishing vessels, the overall key findings of this report are used to implement the SAFE Seas project activities and are used to inform policymakers and relevant stakeholders on how to alleviate livelihood challenges and exploitation faced by the most vulnerable members of the fishing community.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the impact of COVID-19 has had and continues to have devastating effects on those whose sole income is from fishing as reduced physical movement has led to the shutting down of local business and a reduced demand for fish. Especially for families trapped in a debt cycle, the loss of income has negative implications on women particularly. For instance, Filipino women and girls have experienced greater vulnerability to gender-based violence than the global average during the pandemic, with one in five women between the ages of 15 and 49 having experienced violence at least once. Therefore, the need is still persistent for universal social protection, and unconditional government assistance for women and fishers and their families.

Survey Respondent Profiles

The demographic profile of survey respondents did not differ significantly between those whose husbands had experienced FL/TIP and those who had not. In most cases (88%) the fisher was the woman's husband and in nearly all other cases, it was her son (11%). This outcome indicates the women interviewed would most likely have had first-hand experience of the impact of FL/TIP. Wives also reported that most of their husbands did not have proper contracts or formal job agreements with boat owners and because the recruitment process is largely informal, in that 65% secure a job through relatives or friends, most fishers are increasingly vulnerable to exploitive practices. It is interesting to note that 25% of all fishers started working when under 18 years of age, indicating child labour may be or may have been common practice. Survey respondent profiles suggests that women's engagement in terms of media consumption is essential for knowing how future programs can reach them. The media profile of survey respondents however did not differ significantly between households who had experienced FL/TIP and those who had not.

Women's Awareness of FL/TIP Through Gender Lens

Overall, 30% of the women surveyed had never heard about FL/TIP, while 50% said they had heard about it but did not know much about it, leaving 20% who said they were familiar with the topic. These findings highlight the existing evidence gap that even if the husband or son had experienced FL/TIP, this does not automatically translate into women being aware of FL/TIP. Therefore, increased awareness did not necessarily correlate into protecting women from the impact of FL/TIP. Across all Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with both women

and men, there was a general acceptance of poor working conditions as "normal" practice. Verbal and physical abuse were considered part of the job. Overall, 20% of women had a husband or son who experienced abuse, and most participants confirmed they would rather keep quiet to avoid trouble and have therefore come to accept the burden placed upon their families. The authors suggest there are positive indications that if empowered to act, women may help to prevent such things from recurring.

Impact of FL/TIP & Coping Strategies

To examine the impact of FL/TIP, interviewers asked women what their families had experienced since their husbands, sons or male relatives started to work in the fishing sector.

Overall, 59% of women claimed their husbands had not experienced any form of negative impact. However, when comparing women who reported FL/TIP in the survey and those who did not, a stark difference emerged.

No less than 90% of women whose husbands experienced FL/TIP also experienced negative impacts on the family. Stress and having to work extra to make ends meet were the most mentioned consequences on women. Financial pressure and debt burden therefore increased the chances of children dropping out of school to help out at home, and negatively impacted marriages, increasing cases of domestic violence. In contrast, in the absence of FL/TIP, most families (71%) did not experience any such issues.



The primary forms of exploitative working conditions that were mentioned by fishers' wives in the survey include:

- Withholding of salary.
- Forced to work to pay off debt.
- Forced to work overtime.
- Experiencing trauma.
- Having a serious injury.
- Receiving a lower wage than agreed.
- Harassment and humiliation.

Gender Norms, Agency, & the Potential Role of Women

Based on FGD findings, both women and men view their primary obligation as attending to the needs of the family. Beliefs around gender roles and social values are reflected in the division of labour, both within and outside the household. It is evident that most women involved in carrying out fishing supportive activities are not formally recognised in the eyes of both men and women as “working”.

Findings indicate that less than half of all women interviewed (43%) are members of a local community organisation. Among them, 62% are members of an organisation that only caters to women, and half of them (48%) participated regularly. Therefore, another barrier faced by women is a lack of awareness of available services, including formal complaint procedures to which they are available.

For women to increase their participation in activities related to FL/ TIP, developing mitigation agency is essential to amplify women’s voices, to expand their economic choices, learning opportunities and to broaden their views and aspirations.



Woman speaks at Collaborative Action Against Trafficking event.

(© Plan International)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were provided by the report towards taking steps in attaining universal social protection, unconditional government assistance during crises and formal labour protections, including contracts, for fishers in the Philippines. Also included for the first time are some recommendations which are aimed at the families, wives, and mothers, to highlight the gendered element of this form of forced labour:

RECOMMENDATION 1: Raising awareness

- By carrying out widespread awareness-raising activities on FL/TIP and in consideration of its wider gendered impact.
- Adopting television and radio as communication channels.
- Educating women on labour rights, legal services and advocacy strategies.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Enable access to affordable loans and social protection programs:

- Provide access to affordable microloans or credit schemes.
- Promote the use of women-led savings groups.
- Establishing and/or expanding social protection programs in ways that will eliminate the reliance on loans for basic needs.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Promoting livelihood and skills development for greater agency and empowerment of fisher households:

- Increasing engagement and participation in existing community-based programs.
- Offering relevant and targeted livelihood support for women.
- Encouraging school participation.
- Improving counselling support and remedial services for FL/TIP victims and families.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Building capacity and coordination:

- By using this study as an advocacy tool with relevant stakeholders to stimulate dialogue and ensure coordinated efforts to improve the livelihood of fisher households.
- Using community-based organisations to work alongside the Department of Labour and Employment in providing safe, secure and trustworthy reporting mechanisms for cases of labour violations and FL/TIP.
- Strengthening the reporting and support mechanism for Filipino fishers arrested, detained, and exploited by Indonesian authorities.
- Supporting local governments to actively promote gender-sensitive policies that tackle gender stereotypes and occupational segregation.
- Conducting a follow-up study to monitor progress.

FUTURE USE OF FINDINGS

In comparison to previous studies on FL/TIP that have focused on the effect of individual fishers, this report sheds a new light of the impact on spouses and female relatives in fisher households. Further research is needed to identify the future roles for women in their contribution to the prevention and protection against FL/TIP, along with greater evidence on the implications COVID-19 has had on fishing communities and their families in the Philippines.



Newly repaired pamboat at Homonhon's improvised shipyard (Philippines).

(© Plan International)



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GENDER FINANCING: MAPPING FUNDING TO IMPROVE GENDER QUALITY IN NEPAL, KENYA, AND GUATEMALA

Final report was researched and written by Jamie Holton and Henry Lewis and reviewed by Alex Farley-Kiwanuka and Sally Paxton. It was produced with financial support from Save the Children US and Plan International US.

CONTEXT

To hold donors and partner governments accountable to their gender equality commitments the Gender Financing Project was developed to help stakeholders direct or redirect funding, and coordinate and address funding gaps. Tracking gender financing is important as it determines what actions are being taken and what progress is being made. Friends of Publish What You Fund and Publish What You Fund have supported this project in joining their campaign towards greater aid and development transparency. This project aspires to establish a solid evidence-base on how much is being spent on gender, on what projects and in which sectors, and what results gender equality projects are achieving in-country, including whether resources are targeted to meet identified gender priorities.

Definitions

Gender Financing – Any disbursed or committed funding with the intention to improve gender equality, including government gender responsive budgeting and international donors' gender aid.

Gender Aid – Development assistance from international donors, such as official bilateral and multilateral agencies and philanthropic foundations, which has gender equality as a significant (1) or principal (2) objective within the OECD-DAC Handbook

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 concerning gender equality, is used as an important indicator towards gender financing as it determines the level of investment and commitment each country's government holds in addressing issues of gender inequality.

This project undertook three country case studies to examine gender financing within Nepal, Kenya, and Guatemala.

Each country is individually discussed below, overall findings will provide global recommendations to the Global Transparency Report due later in 2021 to reassess commitments to transparency.

Members of the Shrijana Women's Saving and Credit Cooperative (Nepal).
(© Plan International)



Country Scoring based on the SDG Gender Index

- **Nepal:** scores 52.6 out of 100, reflecting a “very poor” achievement of gender equality, below the Asia and the Pacific regional average (64.6).
- **Kenya:** scores 55.1 out of 100, scoring above the identified sub-Saharan regional average (51.1) but still reflecting a “very poor” achievement of gender equality.
- **Guatemala:** scores 58.3 out of 100, reflecting a “very poor” achievement of gender equality, below the Latin America and Caribbean regional average (66.5).



GUATEMALA SDG GENDER INDEX SCORING

58.3 / 100

REFLECTING A "VERY POOR" ACHIEVEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY, BELOW THE LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN REGIONAL AVERAGE (66.5)

NEPAL SDG GENDER INDEX SCORING

52.6 / 100

REFLECTING A "VERY POOR" ACHIEVEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY, BELOW THE ASIA AND THE PACIFIC REGIONAL AVERAGE (64.6)

KENYA SDG GENDER INDEX SCORING

55.1 / 100

SCORING ABOVE THE IDENTIFIED SUB-SAHARAN REGIONAL AVERAGE (51.1) BUT STILL REFLECTING A "VERY POOR" ACHIEVEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY

COUNTRY SCORING BASED ON THE SDG GENDER INDEX

Nepal

The UN categorises Nepal as a Least Developed Country (LDC), comprised of a population of 26 million people, 83% of which live in rural areas. Marked by 10 years of internal armed conflict, in 2006 the country signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that has progressed Nepal's transition towards becoming a federal democratic with a new constitution in 2015. Predominantly due to the effects of the conflict, a quarter of Nepal's population live under the national poverty line and this is likely to have increased during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report recognises Nepal's efforts in globally leading in establishing and sustaining Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB), since its very first Five-Year commitment made in 1956.

Nationally, the government's commitment to developing a comprehensive Aid Management Information System (AMIS) has improved gender equality and women's empowerment in development planning by tracking international-funding initiatives.

Kenya

Demographically, the country is shaped by most Kenyans identifying as Christian and living in rural areas, with almost 40% of the population younger than 15 years of age. The World Bank classifies Kenya as a lower-middle income country due to achievements of economic growth, but this growth is likely to be interrupted by the negative impacts of COVID-19 and the array of locust attacks that have begun in early 2020. To help break traditional stereotypes about gender within policy, the Kenyan government has joined the campaign Break the Roles and has been a member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) since 2011. Additionally, three key institutions which mandate to improve gender equality in Kenya are the State Department for Gender, the National Gender Equality Commission (NGEC), and the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR). The importance of empowering women and girls is also reflected in the Kenyan 2010 Constitution, the national development plan, Vision 2030, and within Kenya's legal and policy frameworks, including the National Policy on Gender and Development. To develop and promote GRB at the national and subnational level, the Kenyan government has developed a comprehensive aid information management system (e-ProMIS) to track internationally funded initiatives.

Guatemala

Within Central America, Guatemala has the largest population, an estimated 18 million people. Guatemala also has the largest economy, classifying it as an upper-middle income country by the World Bank. Despite this growth, Guatemalan's experience high rates of poverty and inequality, which are expected to worsen due to the COVID-19 pandemic and effects of climate change. Similar to Kenya, the Guatemalan government has been a member of the OGP since 2011. The government's National Policy for the Promotion and Integral Development of Women and the Equal Opportunities Plan 2008–23 (PNPDIM-PEO) highlights 12 gender-based priorities, including the eradication of violence against women and legal equity and fairness, towards ensuring GRB is met. The promotion and monitorisation of women's development and gender equality is conducted by the Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM), Guatemala's primary institution that promotes women's rights is the production of its own reports to track national and even municipal GRB funding.



Women learn how to protect their families from COVID-19 in Nepal.
(© Plan International)

METHODOLOGY & ETHICS

To improve the publication of such gender equality financing data, research was conducted through a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The Equal Measures 2030 SDG Gender Index report from 2019 was used as an indicator guideline in attaining quantitative data. Whilst qualitative data was collected by literature reviews of relevant policy and strategy reports issued by the donor, partner organisations and governments, international organisations, and local organisations. Using a country-based approach, available gender equality financing data was collected from the top five donors of each country to determine what information is available and what information is missing. Data was collected at three stages: 1) a desk review, 2) in-country field research involving qualitative key informant interviews (KIIs) and 3) the production of a final synthesis report for each country.

Research Questions

- 1 What is the current gender context?
- 2 To what extent does the current available gender equality financing data reflect the situation and gender priorities in-country?
- 3 Can changes to gender-related aid data collection, publication, or access improve the publication of gender equality financing data to meet stakeholders' information needs? If so, what changes would be required?

Methods

- **National budget and policy analysis** – assessed the extent national budgets are focused and improved on providing gender equality. The report also analysed existing gender equality and data transparency policies.
- **International donors funding analysis** – analysed international donors gender aid based on their self-reporting to the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) for 2018. A transparency assessment within each country of the availability and quality of data published by the top five highest donors and their top five highest-disbursing projects for 2018 was conducted, along with a comparison against the International Aid Transparency Initiatives (IATI) development portal.
- **Interviews** – semi-structured key informant interviews were taken as key respondents working on gender equality in country were asked to reflect on the current gender financing landscape as well as their data priorities and suggestions towards publication improvements.
- **Follow up surveys** – to complement interview findings, additional multiple-choice online surveys were passed to all interviews to ask for more disaggregated information about the types of data they use, share, and need for their gender equality work.

Ethical Considerations & Limitations

Ethical considerations were undertaken through gaining informed consent from research participants including protecting identities and personal information.

The report highlights the need for recommendations to be carefully put forward in light of project limitations, such as the findings being limited to three case study countries. Additionally, purposive and snowball sampling are likely to be influenced by bias, as the organisations and/or individuals identified through stakeholder mapping may be limited by pre-existing networks, knowledge and those organisations with an online presence. To mitigate this, the study has used either in-house expertise (where available) or local, knowledgeable, consultants that help to identify additional stakeholders. To ensure that key informant interview questions and guides were as useful as possible, the study further conducted background interviews and consulted advisory committees to inform key informants of the questions ahead of the research trips to develop an understanding of the relevant issues at stake.

KEY FINDINGS

Although the governments of Nepal, Kenya and Guatemala show commitment towards upholding SDG 5, key gender equality stakeholders across all countries remain dissatisfied with the quantity and quality of available gender financing data.

This project highlights the efforts made by governments in developing and promoting GRB at the national level and sub-national levels, particularly in Kenya. The creation of comprehensive aid management information systems such as AMIS in Nepal, the Electronic Project Monitoring Information System (e-ProMIS) in Kenya, and the State Integrated Accounting System (SICOIN) in Guatemala are all considered positive indicators towards tracking internationally funded initiatives in ensuring gender financing. International donors have made significant efforts to apply the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker to their financial commitments to gender equality in Nepal, Kenya, and Guatemala.

Main reasons for dissatisfaction included:

- Data issues around insufficient detail
- Insufficient gender-disaggregation
- Timelines (i.e., old data)
- Dissatisfaction with trust in data sources
- Levels of accessibility
- Conflicting information between data sources
- Lack of qualitative data

However, the report suggests that it remains unclear who donors are targeting (e.g. women, LGBTQ+ people, gender-based violence survivors), what efforts donors undertake to ensure their projects do not reinforce gender inequalities, and what impact their projects are having on gender equality.

Nepal: Overview of Key Findings

- In 2018 the Government of Nepal spent approximately ten times more on improving gender equality in Nepal than international donors.
- Nepal's GRB budgets are relatively clear but tracking implementation and spending is a challenge.
- Access to funding is currently insufficient and dependent on organisational type.

Kenya: Overview of Key Findings

- In 2018 donors spent approximately nine times more on improving gender equality in Kenya than the government.
- An implementation gap exists despite noteworthy policies and guidelines for GRB in Kenya: One explanation for the implementation gap of GRB could be that current guidelines offer insufficient practical tools or methodologies to counties and government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) when classifying their budget allocations towards GRB.
- For the Kenyan government to directly link its allocations to its gender priorities, more consistent and comprehensive application of GRB policies is needed.

Guatemala: Overview of Key Findings

- In 2018 the Guatemalan government spent approximately three times more on improving gender equality in Guatemala in comparison to international donors.
- SICOIN data does not contain sufficient information on Guatemala's national expenditure towards its PNPDIM-PEO priorities as various Guatemalan institutions also portray inconsistencies in how GRB information is published and collected, underscoring the need for clearer and more consistent reporting across the Guatemalan government.



Women attend group meeting and training session on saving and business administration (Guatemala).

(© Plan International)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite efforts by governments to offer transparent information on national and international funding to improve gender equality, there persists a lack of data needed for gender advocates. Based on this reports budget, policy analysis, and key findings from interviewees, the project has suggested the following recommendations and questions to each government.

Key considerations for Governments

NEPAL

- 1 Improvements in the applications of GRB** – to help deliver on its gender equality commitments (nationally and globally), questions were raised by the project as to how the Nepali government can utilise existing and/or develop new tools and mechanisms to improve the application of GRB.
- 2 Improving the quantity and quality of government gender financing data.**
- 3 Meeting gender advocated needs** – for Nepal based NGOs and women's rights organisations to be adopted within national governments plans to engage and initiate collaborate consultations in data usage, design and implementation.

KENYA

- 1 Filling in the GRM implementation gap** – to help Kenya track progress on gender related policies and priorities and to help deliver on its gender equality commitments, the government should utilise existing tools and/or develop new tools and mechanisms at particularly the national and country-levels to address the current implementation gap in GRB.
- 2 Improving the quantity and quality of government gender financing data** – particularly making improvements in the timeliness and quality of available data.
- 3 Meeting gender advocated needs** – for Kenya engaging the National Treasury along with NGOs and women's rights organisations will be essential in internal discussions and processes around the collection, analysis, and publication of national and country-level gender financing data.

GUATEMALA

- 1 Overlooking National Gender Leadership** – questions were raised by the project as to whether the government should commit to reinstituting its support to the Presidential Secretariat for Women (SEPREM) to track and report on national (and sub-national) gender financing data.
- 2 Improving the quantity and quality of government gender financing data** – in order to hold the government accountable and to track the country's progress on national and global gender commitments, it is recommended to the government to continue to regularly publish clear and comprehensive data on its gender spending and initiatives. Questions were raised by the project as to what steps the government can take to improve the timeliness, accessibility, and granularity of gender financing data.
- 3 Importance of engaging the public and gender advocated on data needs** – utilising Guatemala's feminist network is deemed critical within the report to improve national gender data generation and publication.

Key considerations for international donors across Nepal, Kenya and Guatemala

- 1 Supporting local gender equality advocated capacity and data publications** – donors can support NGOs, WROs and feminist networks to collect, manage, analyse, and publish gender financial and programmatic data to ensure sustainable and long-term capacity around data management.
- 2 Engaging with gender advocated on data needs** – greater research into how donors can create more inclusive and collaborative engagement pathways around the data needs of NGOs, WROs, and feminist networks working on gender equality to align their publication practices.
- 3 Supporting donor country offices**

FUTURE USE OF FINDINGS

Both governments and international donors have made commendable efforts to make gender equality financing transparent across each case study. Their publication of financial and programmatic data on gender equality initiatives have been critical in measuring impact, informing programme design, and planning gender responsive budgets and commitments across all organisational types. The goal of attaining SDG 5, the promotion of gender equality, can be implemented in the future by advising different stakeholders on the advantages of providing clearer data on national and international gender spending.

What is missing from the current gender funding picture?

NEPAL

- Covid is impacting the availability of gender equality funding, concerns arose among Nepal-based and international NGO interviewees that longer-term funding for programs will be decreased as donor priorities shift away from gender towards addressing the consequences of COVID-19.
- The role of private foundations, humanitarian actors, INGOs, development financial institutions, and WROs in funding gender equality.

KENYA

- As Kenyan based NGOs are being disproportionately affected by the pandemic, the impact of COVID-19 on gender financing is resulting in significant funding uncertainties.
- Similar to Nepal, the role of private foundations, humanitarian actors, INGOs, development finance institutions, and WROs in funding gender equality is missing.

GUATEMALA

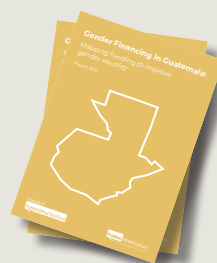
- Despite being under-resourced, Guatemala-based NGOs in particular indicated that they turn to women's funds and feminist organisations for funding as it is more flexible and better aligned with their own organisational priorities.
- The impact of COVID-19 on gender financing has led to interviewees having to modify budgets and priorities to meet the new context of the pandemic. New funding has been slow to materialise and has only focused on helping organisations purchase safety equipment.
- Additionally, the role of private foundations, humanitarian actors, INGOs, development finance institutions, and WROs in funding gender equality is also missing.



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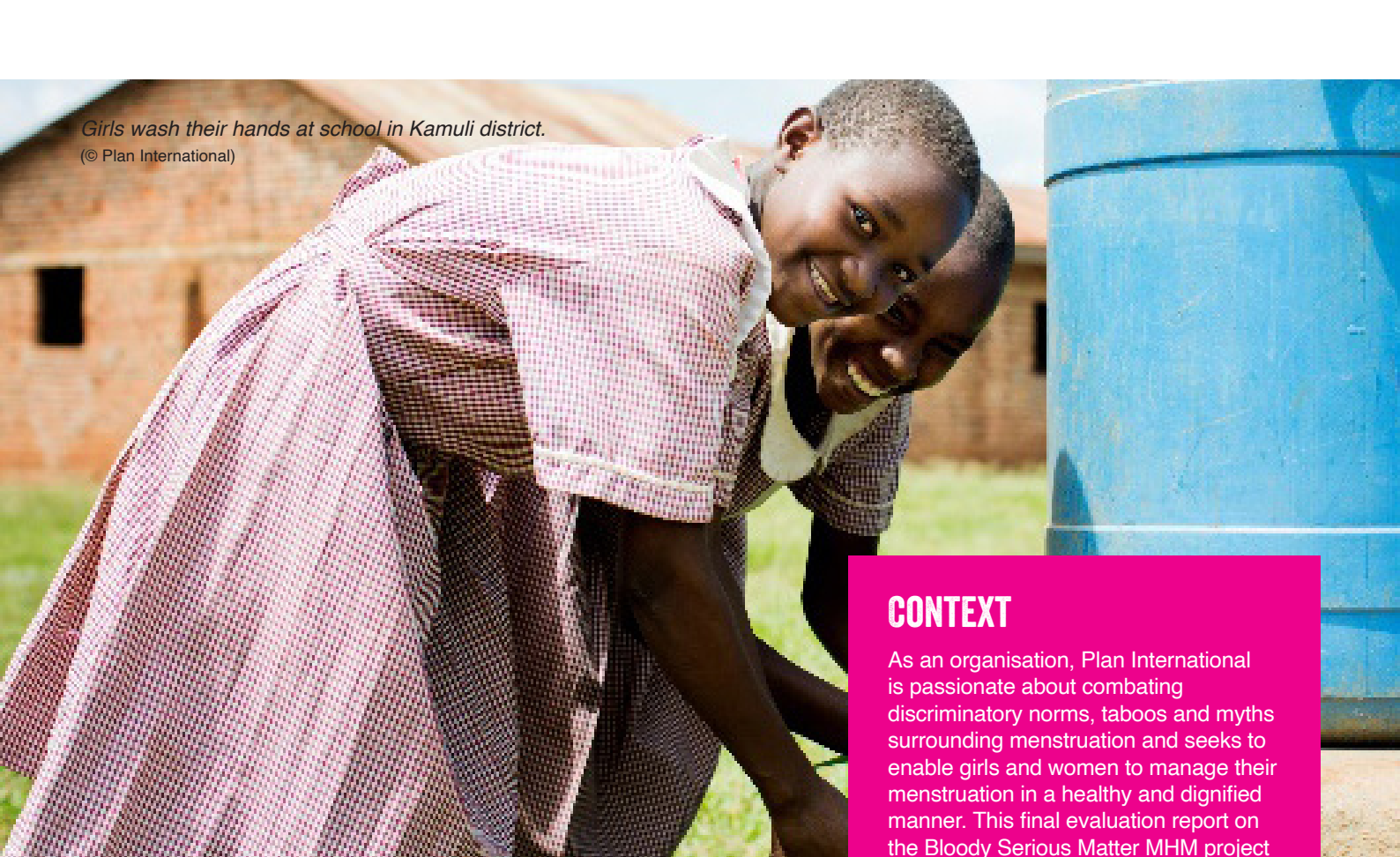
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Girls wash their hands at school in Kamuli district.

(© Plan International)

A BLOODY SERIOUS MATTER: MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT IN UGANDA

Final report was supported by the National Postcode Lottery and researched by Plan International Uganda's Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) team.

CONTEXT

As an organisation, Plan International is passionate about combating discriminatory norms, taboos and myths surrounding menstruation and seeks to enable girls and women to manage their menstruation in a healthy and dignified manner. This final evaluation report on the Bloody Serious Matter MHM project acknowledges that many countries both developed and developing, experience a climate that limits the development of girls and women to reach their full potential, due to the lack of proper information they receive about their own bodies and sexual reproductive health systems, and what menstruation is and how to manage it hygienically. Additionally, the accessibility of affordable and hygienic menstrual products and private, clean latrines continues to be problematic.

In Uganda, parents that believe once a girl receives her first period that she is ready to get married tend to remove girls from school early. For instance, one in every four adolescent girls who miss school do so because of menstruation-related problems in Uganda. But it is important to also note that many girls themselves choose to drop out. To break down the barriers that are withholding girls and women from exercising their sexual rights and health, and ensure that menstruation is not limiting girls and young women's wellbeing and development, Plan Uganda has been collaborating with all sectors of the communities from girls and boys, women and men, local communities, schools, parents, teachers and healthcare workers, religious and local leaders and local and national governments.

METHODOLOGY

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches were used for data collection. A review was conducted of relevant documents such as project reports and records, Plan International Uganda policies and standards, and relevant government policies. In order to determine project progress across target participants (girls and boys) of the project, the team applied a cross-sectional study design during the assessment. The key dimensions for the study included project relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability in relation to knowledge, attitudes and practices in menstrual hygiene management; girls' access to affordable hygienic pads for continued education, girls' access to WASH facilities in schools, and income sustainability for young women and girls.

The qualitative approach used by the study focused on generating explanations relating to the context within which the MHM project was implemented. Using a structured questionnaire 38 focus group discussions (FDGs) were conducted with several stakeholders (children-girls and boys, women, and men); and 99 key informant interviews (KIIs) held with critical stakeholders like Plan staff, teachers, village health teams, members of village savings and loan association/AFRIPads dealers, producers of pads, and members of the drama groups, among others.

Data Collection Methods

Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected using the following techniques.

- **Structured Interviews:** a structured questionnaire was used to facilitate data capture through face-to-face interviews. A total of 280 interviews were conducted.
- **Key Informant Interviews (KII):** 99 In-depth interviews with key informants were conducted using an interview guide and a total of 99 interviews were conducted. These included Plan staff, AFRIPads representatives and dealers, district officials, and school teachers and administrators.
- **Focus Group Discussions:** These were conducted with girls, boys and parents (women and men) to triangulate the information gathered from the structured interviews.
- **Observation:** for this, a checklist was used as a quick reference point to document aspects the consulting team considered important for the study such as observed behaviour and observed practice.
- **Photography:** During the study, photographs were used to depict the quality and status of facilities that promote hygienic menstrual hygiene practices.
- **Most Significant Change (MSC) Stories:** This was used to conduct an extensive interview with specifically selected beneficiaries that have a unique story to tell about how the project has impacted on their lives.



ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethical considerations were considered by the consulting team to adhere to Plan International's Child Protection Policy. The data collection team was oriented to the child protection policy before data collection, and all participants in the study signed the acknowledgement form and used informed consent/assent forms during the study. In addition, the report highlights the following steps that were undertaken to ensure adherence to ethical standards and principles:

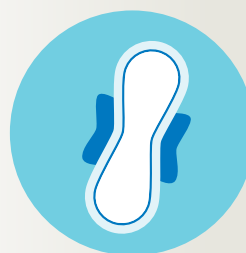
- Data collectors sought informed consent/assent from all respondents and/or guardians to participate in the evaluation before data collection.
- A statement of confidentiality in respect to beneficiary data was embedded in all data collection tools, explaining the purpose of the evaluation and committing not to divulge individual respondent details but rather report on them as an aggregate of all data collected.
- The data collection team signed confidentiality agreements in an effort to protect the participants' information. The team was briefed on the legal ramifications for non-compliance with the code of conduct and policy.
- Letters of introduction to the relevant local government offices explaining the purpose of the evaluation were provided by Plan International Uganda to all research team members.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES



OBJECTIVE 1

Improving Knowledge, Attitudes and MHM Practices (KAP) among rural women, adolescent girls, boys, men, and governments in Tororo, Lira and Kamuli Districts.



OBJECTIVE 2

Increasing access to affordable and hygienic sanitary pads among rural women and girls in Tororo, Lira and Kamuli.



OBJECTIVE 3

Increasing access to equitable gender friendly WASH facilities among girls and boys in Tororo, Lira, and Kamuli.



Girls use new toilet block built by Plan at their school in the Kamuli district.
(© Plan International)

OVERALL IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

The Bloody Serious Matter project since piloting has contributed significantly to raising awareness of good Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and implementing changes in the national government's approach on MHM and the wider Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector.

Key Impacts

- **Increased level of knowledge about MHM:** 95% of girls had correct knowledge about MHM in June 2019 compared to 68% in June 2012, and 95% of the boys had correct knowledge about MHM in June 2019 compared to 54% in June 2012.
- **Changing attitudes regarding MHM:** 90% of the girls no longer regarded menstruation as a secret issue compared to 65% at the start of the project and 88% of respondents reported knowledge that girls/ women have the right to go to places of worship (church, mosque) during menstruation compared to 72% at baseline.
- **Improvement in MHM practices:** With the construction of 69 girl friendly, inclusive latrine blocks and 34 boreholes at schools, gender equitable WASH facilities in schools have increased substantially. Due to various activities access to affordable and appropriate sanitary materials has increased from 87% to 96%. By December 2020, Plan International was able to reach more than 200,109 beneficiaries, which included 72,140 girls, 47,968 boys, 43,942 men & 36,059 women. Girls are increasingly and successfully attending and finishing school in project areas increasing from 56% to 95% and girls are continuing to mention how menstruation is no longer limiting them from attending school. The overall impact of engagement activities such as a theatre for development about MHM, the construction of girl friendly school latrines and waterpoints, and the training of schoolgirls and boys in how to make re-usable menstrual pads for instance has proven very significant.

Sustainability of Project Activities

- After receiving training from Plan, school authorities now allocate 10%-20% of their annual budgets towards operation and maintenance of their WASH facilities as well as procuring of materials for making emergency pads as part of the art and crafts session.
- 50 local entrepreneurs including tailors, youth and women groups will continue to make and sell pads in their communities.
- The 34 waterpoints constructed for this project are all handed over to the district government. Maintenance of the waterpoints is handed over to water user committees who will establish an affordable user fee which could be set aside to cover maintenance costs.
- 158 School Health Clubs decided to break menstrual taboos, informing people in their community on good menstrual practices through community theatre.
- Due to support of Plan and other international NGO's MHM is now part of the national school curriculum and as a result, the Ministry of Education is adopting a MHM education programme to all schools in Uganda.

The project has also contributed to a shift in gender relations and power dynamics among girls and their parents and girls and boys. From views expressed within the final evaluation, girls are supported by boys and their fathers to stay in school after they started their period and mothers and fathers are more open to discuss MHM with their daughters. Additionally, both male and female teachers have become more confident in teaching on this subject.

Insights from this evaluation will help to adjust project implementation accordingly towards gaining a bigger impact. For instance, the implications caused by the COVID-19 crisis, encouraged Plan to further explore the importance of good access to menstrual hygiene products and information whilst during a crisis. As a result, Plan quickly learned how to provide girls and women MHM information via radio campaigns and adapted to providing dignity kits which included menstrual pads to those who did not have the means or accessibility of attaining these products across Uganda. Currently, MHM activities are being launched from the lessons learned from Uganda to being globally implemented as part of Plans wider WASH projects in Ethiopia, Zambia, Indonesia and Nepal.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When developing the new MHM project in Uganda, the report has taken the following lessons and recommendations into consideration:

Recommendations

- 1** Increasing involvement of boys and men as champions of change to facilitate the de-mystification of taboos and myths surrounding MHM.
- 2** Utilising community theatre for development as it has proven to be an effective low-cost high impact approach towards breaking taboos and providing MHM information to all generations. The drama skits attract mass audiences and facilitates a social awakening on the norms, and culture surrounding MHM.
- 3** Focusing on teacher training as teachers are key in conveying menstruation information to girls and boys in school. Additionally, it is crucial to train at least 4-5 teachers per school to ensure MHM expertise remains at a school.
- 4** Increasing collaboration with private companies, for instance AFRIPads was very efficient in creating a sustainable supply chain for MHM products. However, in the future an affordability assessment of the target group will help to determine if the product is affordable for the girls and women the project is aiming to reach.

FUTURE USE OF FINDINGS

For Plan International, The Bloody Serious Matter project has been a flagship in improving knowledge, attitudes and practices around menstrual hygiene and increasing the accessibility and affordability of hygiene pads. Plan International Uganda, in partnership with Ministry of Education and Sports, has trained 52 community-based organisations on MHM to scale up MHM activities throughout the country. Additionally, this project has contributed to a shift in attitudes on MHM in the wider WASH sector and many other Plan Country Offices have learned from this project and started implementing MHM projects themselves. The sharing of information and partnership between Plan International and other WASH organisations has therefore proven successful.

As the position of women and girls has been positively impacted by this project, Plan has decided to scale up the Bloody Serious Matter project activities in the Kamuli District of Uganda for the coming two years.

Plan International Netherlands is dedicated to support efforts to intensify the search for new funding to implement even more MHM activities in other districts in Uganda and other countries. The final report offers an extensive overview per each year of various campaigns implemented to the wider Dutch public, such as the “Bag to School” campaign in 2016, that helped to benefit the project through the proceed of the sale. Insights within the Netherlands help to redefine how communications about MHM promotion are digested by various communities and how Plan can seek to implement even more MHM activities internationally.



[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REPORT](#)

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Father and daughter in what remains of their shelter which they are repairing (Bangladesh).

(© Plan International)

MALE ENGAGEMENT IN FAMILY PLANNING

UNDERSTANDING POLICY IMPLEMENTATION BARRIERS AND ENABLERS IN NEPAL & BANGLADESH

This publication was prepared by Elisabeth Rottach (Palladium), Erin DeGraw (Plan International USA), and Stephanie Perlson (Population Reference Bureau) for the Health Policy Plus project.

CONTEXT

The role of men is important in family planning, firstly to meet their own reproductive health needs and then to support and facilitate their partners access and use of family planning services. Discussions on engaging men in historically women dominated family planning programmes, dates back to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo. The conference was instrumental in raising awareness for the greater participation of men, the commitment to sharing household responsibilities, the promotion of gender equality, equity, and the empowerment of women.

Definition of Male engagement –

male engagement in family planning refers to the involvement of men and boys across life stages as clients and users, supportive partners, and agents of change in ways that intentionally challenge unequal gender and power dynamics.

Currently, policy-level barriers are prohibiting men and boys from access and information to family planning. Greater prioritisation on facilitating the engagement of young men and boys as contraceptive users, as supportive partners for family planning, and as agents of change is needed. The Health Policy Plus (HP+) project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development have responded to this gap, by examining the policy environment for male engagement in family planning across Bangladesh and Nepal.

Bangladesh

The need to engage men and boys in family planning in Bangladesh has some unique challenges. High rates of child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and poor maternal and new-born health outcomes prohibit the engagement of men and boys in family planning. Engaging adolescent boys earlier on to instil positive habits from an early age can increase chances that they will remain engaged in protecting their own reproductive health and that of their family.

Nepal

Country data suggests that similar to Bangladesh, the need to engage men and boys in family planning remains persistent. As a country phased by high rates of child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and unequal social and gender norms, Nepal is challenged in providing access to family planning services. Additionally, 58% of the Nepali population is under the age of 25. Therefore, encouraging positive habits from an early age will increase chances of engagement.

PROJECT APPROACH

The male engagement policy framework is used to examine whether or not policies support or hinder men's and boy's involvement in family planning.

The framework is organised around three overlapping roles. The first being men and boys as family planning clients, the second as supportive partners, and lastly men and boys as agents of change. The approach includes 7 principles for male engagement along with 27 evidence-based policy provisions that influence male engagement in family planning.

Policy Framework for Male Engagement

MEN AND BOYS AS FAMILY PLANNING CLIENTS

- **Male-friendly services:** Positions men centrally as family planning clients; ensures provision of high quality, accessible male-friendly information and services as well as a wide availability of condoms.
- **Clinical guidelines:** Directs services to have protocols in place to assess and address men's family planning needs.
- **Vasectomy:** Requires pre-vasectomy counselling and does not require unnecessary eligibility requirements; allows associate clinicians and doctors to provide vasectomies as part of established competencies; provides affordable vasectomy services.

MEN AND BOYS AS SUPPORTIVE PARTNERS

- **Shared responsibility:** Recognises the importance of a couple's shared responsibility for contraception and for relationships that are built on respect; uses strategies to include men in family planning programs in a way that supports and protects women's decision making.
- **Information and education:** Uses strategies to educate men and boys on women's reproductive health and directs programs to provide opportunities for them to build empathy for women's and girls' family planning concerns.
- **Caregiving:** Recognises the role of men in caregiving and includes strategies to enhance their caregiving and parenting skills.

MEN AND BOYS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

- **Advocates:** Directs family planning programs to engage and train male role models and family planning advocates.
- **Influencers:** Directs programs to engage men in leadership positions to publicly encourage men and boys to support their own reproductive health and that of women and girls.

PRINCIPLES FOR MALE ENGAGEMENT

- **Do no harm:** Aims to meet men's needs while respecting women's autonomy.
- **Positive engagement:** Directs programs to involve men from a positive perspective.
- **Rights-based:** Stipulates that men have equitable access to voluntary, high-quality family planning services that provide full, free, and informed choice for men to meet their health needs.
- **Reproductive empowerment:** Recognises men's ability to choose whether, when, and how many children to have has long-term impacts on their own lives.
- **Youth:** Directs family planning programs to use an age-appropriate life-stage approach tailored to cultural contexts.
- **Multisectoral approach:** Uses multisectoral and integrated programs combining community norms, outreach, mobilisation, and mass-media campaigns with group education.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Includes measures to track differential impacts of family planning policies and programs by gender.

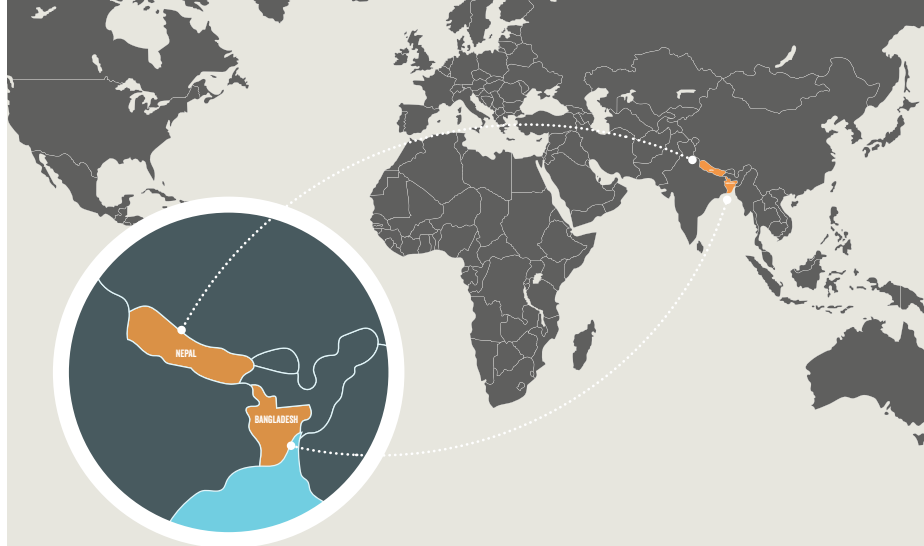
Methodology & Limitations

The methods used within this analysis were conducted by HP+. A collection of policy reviews, interviews with key informants and in country reviews of policies and guidelines were collected. Followed by a text analysis of the policies to identify policy barriers and enablers and to assess the extent to which they meet the standards enlisted in the male engagement policy framework.

In Bangladesh 17 key informant interviews with stakeholders at the national level were conducted to identify key barriers and enablers to effective implementation of family planning and male engagement policies. Additionally, 23 policies and associated documents were collected by HP+ to review what influenced men and boy's involvement in family planning, with a focus on national health and population policies. Further reviews were conducted on the national women's development policy, adolescent health and development strategies, and the implementation plan for family planning.

In Nepal, 30 key informant interviews with stakeholders in Kathmandu, Karnali Province, and Province No.2 were conducted by HP+ to identify key barriers and enablers to effective implementation of family planning and male engagement policies. The selection of provinces was based on USAID priorities, geographic and sociocultural diversity and variation in modern contraceptive prevalence and migration rates. Additionally, 26 policies and guidelines were collected, with a focus on family planning counselling guidelines.

A limitation of this analysis is that HP+ did not interview clients of family planning services and did not further explore any interview questions regarding individual's use of family planning services.



KEY FINDINGS

From the text analysis, key findings were presented according to men and boys roles as family planning clients, supportive partners, and agents of change within Bangladesh and Nepal. Additional key findings were summarised from key informant interviews and policy reviews that researched policy execution enablers and barriers.

Text Analysis Findings: The Policy Framework

BANGLADESH

The government of Bangladesh has made significant efforts to improving rights-based family planning services. The inclusion of family planning within national laws, policies, and strategies to enable women, men, and couples to attain their desired family size has been a step forward in the priority towards improving the health and wellbeing of the population. However, the exclusion of unmarried men and adolescents within Bangladesh's policy framework for family planning is hindering the accessibility of services and information available. Reproductive health and family planning is still managed as a women's issue with targeted strategies to improve access and availability for women specifically.

The policy landscape does not consistently include a comprehensive approach to support men and boys as family planning clients, supportive partners, or agents of change. Additionally, the HP+ text analysis did not identify any policy barriers that explicitly restricted men's engagement in family planning, even though there are several male engagement policy provisions missing from the Bangladesh policy framework, that, if included, could help to create a more enabling environment for engaging both men and boys in family planning.

NEPAL

In comparison to Bangladesh, Nepal's policy framework for family planning is more universal and inclusive, as it is aimed to reach most people within family planning information and services. Targeted strategies are implemented to reach the vulnerable and unreached populations, including adolescents within Nepal. Male engagement and access to contraceptive methods is considered important in helping to reduce the unmet need for family planning. The text analysis however did not find any policies that comprehensively addressed all three of men's and boys' roles in family planning. Strategies to engage men and boys in a meaningful way as supportive partners and/or agents of change was lacking in comparison to policies focusing on addressing men and boys within their roles as family planning clients. Similar to Bangladesh, the review did not identify any policy barriers that explicitly restrict men's and boys' engagement in family planning, despite there being several male engagement policy provisions missing from the Nepal policy framework.

Key Informant Interview Findings

This section presents findings from the key informant interviews, focusing on policy execution enablers and barriers.

BANGLADESH

Within Bangladesh respondents from interview findings reported that both condoms and non-surgical vasectomy (NSV) are promoted by the government, implementing partners, and healthcare workers. Therefore, the availability of male-methods of contraception support policy implementations. Additionally, respondents noted that NSV services are available for free at higher-level facilities as well as at permanent method camps. Data still suggests however that within Bangladesh sterilization services are still almost exclusively used by women due to socio-cultural barriers that consider family planning a women's responsibility and due to persistent misconceptions about vasectomies. Interestingly, the private sector has increased access to contraceptives for adolescents, providing a safe space for them to access contraceptive methods outside healthcare facilities. Reducing the barrier placed by the government that only married individuals are eligible for family planning services at public health facilities. A behavioural change is needed within Bangladeshi civil society organisations to increase community sensitisation and engagement towards supporting male engagement.

Barriers towards policy execution demonstrate that low fertility rates have shifted priority away from family planning to maternal and child health. Respondents within this analysis reported that the family planning policy formulation processes do try to be inclusive of a broad range of stakeholders, including multiple ministries, civil society organisations, and grassroots organisations. However, based on data collected men and boys are not viewed as critical stakeholders, limiting engagement.

Additionally, male engagement policies within the study reveal:

- A lack of leadership for male engagement.
- Funding that is not sufficiently allocated to support male engagement activities.
- Poor quality and missing data on male engagement by monitoring and accountability systems.
- Limited country-specific evidence on men's and boys' family planning needs.
- A lack of capacity to provide male-friendly health services due to insufficient health care worker capacity and socio-economic barriers.
- Strong social and gender norms that continue to limit men's and boys' demand for family planning.
- Inadequate school based CSE curriculum and training delivery.

A husband and wife both take an equal share in looking after their children (Nepal).

(© Plan International)



NEPAL

Policy execution enablers and policymakers and program managers in Nepal hold positive attitudes toward men's and boys' role in family planning. Key informant interviews suggest a level of openness around men's and boys' roles in family planning as an enabling factor for the development and implementation of male engagement policies and programs. For the availability of male methods of contraception supports policy implementation.

Policy execution barriers recognised the gap in how policies are translated into programs and budgets. Additionally, male engagement policies within the study reveal:

- A lack of leadership for male engagement.
- A lack of capacity for policy and program development.
- A lack of capacity to provide male-friendly health services.
- Unequal social and gender norms that view family planning as a women's issue which make implementing male engagement policies challenging.
- Family planning programs that do not adequately reach migrant workers.
- A limitation placed on data for decision making due to inadequate systems of monitoring and accountability for male engagement in family planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several barriers prohibiting the development and implementation of policies towards male engagement in family planning were identified. To address these gaps, HP+ suggests the following policy and program recommendations to strengthen development and implementation of family planning policies in Bangladesh and Nepal.

Bangladesh

RECOMMENDATION 1

Generate more evidence about what works for engaging young men and boys in family planning in Bangladesh – setting the goal to further analyse Bangladeshi data already available around male engagement in family planning and refocus researchers attention to preparing evidence-based recommendations that can be used to strengthen male-friendly services and integrate male engagement more effectively into policies and programmes as needed.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Strengthen family planning policies to explicitly engage men and boys in family planning – by embedding male engagement strategies in national policies to elevate male engagement to a priority policy goal, which would help to create an enabling environment for men and boys involvement in family planning.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Remove family planning policy barrier for adolescents – the inclusion of unmarried adolescents in policy provisions to access family planning services is key if Bangladesh seeks to limit cases of unintended and unhealthy pregnancies.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Strengthen capacity to develop and implement male engagement policies across all levels of the health system – further encouraging ministries to provide technical support and update family planning guidelines to health and family planning offices to plan and manage family planning policies and programmes.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Strengthen accountability mechanisms related to male engagement – strengthen monitoring platforms to include specific male engagement indicators for family planning.

Nepal

RECOMMENDATION 1

Generate more evidence about what works for engaging young men and boys in family planning in Nepal – Similar to Bangladesh further analysis of data already available around male engagement in family planning is needed, as well as refocusing researcher's attention on preparing evidence-based recommendations that can be used to strengthen male-friendly services and integrate male engagement more effectively into policies and programs is needed.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Strengthen family planning policies to explicitly engage men and boys in family planning – by updating policies and planning to include strategies, activities, and indicators that specifically support the 3 roles of male engagement in family planning. Embedding male engagement strategies in national policies will elevate male engagement to a priority policy goal.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Strengthen capacity to develop and implement male engagement policies across all levels of the health system – In Nepal capacity gaps have been created due to the political transition to federalism. Greater technical support is needed to strengthen the capacity of decision makers and health officers to provide stronger leadership in implementing policy development.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Engage young men in development and dissemination of family planning policies and programs – To design strategies that meet family planning needs and accessibility.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Strengthen data management systems related to male engagement – particularly by age and location to improve understandings of male engagement family planning needs and how well the health system is meeting those needs.



USE OF FINDINGS

The male engagement policy framework used in this analysis has helped explore barriers to policy execution and helped to identify priority policy actions that strengthen a supportive environment for engaging boys and young men in family planning programs and services. An important strategy to foster a sense of legitimacy and normalcy for male engagement in family planning is the engagement of the larger community. By strengthening the policy environment for engaging men and boys into family planning programmes, men and women have gained greater access and use of family planning services as well as national improvements towards gender equality. Therefore, taking into consideration male engagement, and not only the well-being of women and girls in family planning will have significant impacts not only for their own but for that of their children.

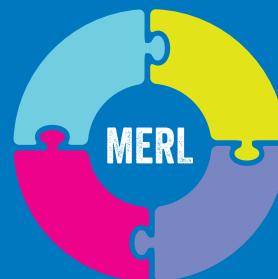


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Evaluations, and other MERL initiatives, can be criticised when they fail to provide high quality, useful and timely information that meets the needs of different users. This can often be traced back to weaknesses in the planning and budgeting process. If we develop realistic and accurate MERL plans during project design, with adequate budget and resourcing allocated for activities, then we can better ensure high quality and useful evaluations and research that support in demonstrating the results of our work, learning from experience, and advocating for change.

Plan International has developed a suite of new global guidance to help staff with planning and budgeting for baselines, evaluations and other studies such as research. The guidance package includes:

- Details of the critical activities that need to be considered, and what to take into account when planning for each of these activities.
- Information on what drives costs at each stage of the process, including both human resources and expenses.
- Guidance on some of the most important decisions that we should make during project design, and if relevant proposal development, to ensure that we can later deliver on what we have promised.
- An optional template that teams can use to estimate the costs of baselines, evaluations and research, including a new calculator to help assess how much data collection time is needed based on the study design.

The **Planning and Budgeting for Project MERL** Guidance Package will be released early in FY22, along with a suite of training materials to help teams understand and apply the materials. Watch out for more information coming soon!

PUBLISHED BY: THE GLOBAL MONITORING, EVALUATION, RESEARCH AND LEARNING TEAM AT PLAN INTERNATIONAL

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