PLAN INTERNATIONAL | GIRLS GET EQUAL

Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media

TAKING THE LEAD

GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN ON CHANGING THE FACE OF LEADERSHIP

RESEACH REPORT

CONTENTS

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Leadership is an ability to lead, set a good example, and give the best of oneself to serve people." Young woman, 18-20, Senegal

Research across 19 countries, involving over 10,000 girls and young women has revealed a lot about girls' aspirations to lead: about what holds them back, what encourages them and what needs to be in place for their aspirations to become reality. The story shows that many girls want to be leaders, they want, too, to be a particular type of leader - compassionate, dedicated to their community, to upholding girls' rights and listening to the needs of others - but they are not encouraged in their ambitions. They are held back by society's limited expectations of what is "appropriate" for them as young women and by a leadership model of authority and hierarchy that they cannot identify with: denied the places and spaces, and the role models, that would enable them to realise their dreams.

- **Girls and young women aspire to lead:** 59%[1] of girls say they would like to be a leader in their career or job but fewer have aspirations to lead in their country (21%), community (19%), or family (23%).
- **Girls and young women have confidence in their leadership abilities:** only 5% said they felt no confidence at all, with 62% confident or very confident in their ability to lead.
- Girls and young women **have a different definition of leadership**: one that is collaborative and brings about positive change, rather than authoritarian and controlling.
- Career aspirations **increase with education and social status** and decrease with marriage.
- Wanting to be a national leader **increases with social status and marriage**
- Girls with lower social status are **more likely to aspire to become leaders in their communities**
- **Age is critical**: across all areas of leadership, **as girls get older their ambitions decrease, Girls are also acutely aware of the barriers they are likely to face if they follow their aspirations.**
- ✓ **Gender discrimination, blatant sexism and stereotyping** are all named as barriers**:** these are tied in with pervasive social and cultural norms and the gendered expectations around balancing work and family life.
- ✓ Overall girls perceive **a lack of respect for**, and harsher criticism of, female leaders.
- ✓ 60% of girls and young women believe women have to **work harder than men** to be respected.
- ✓ 93% believe female leaders will have experienced **unwanted physical contact.**
- ✓ These perceptions of gender barriers are enough of a deterrent but they are not just perceptions: **young women who have actual experience of leading often reported even higher levels of gender discrimination** than respondents with less or no experience of leading.

"Balancing between work and personal life may be difficult. I don't think it's difficult for men to balance between work and their personal life. However, it seems much tougher for women to balance their personal life and work when they become a leader. I feel women leaders are pressured to choose between work or their personal life." Young woman, 15-20, Japan

The research clearly reveals that young women want to be change-makers. And that **they are advancing definitions of leadership** based on community, collaboration, social justice and gender equality. They rate interpersonal skills, kindness and fairness over more traditional notions of leadership such as power, ambition, status and hierarchy. Girls' definition of leadership is one of serving others not being served by them.

"A good leader will always think about her people." Girl, 15-17, South Sudan

There are regional differences across the survey and differences as a result of educational and income levels, some of which we will analyse later in the report, but there are also marked similarities between the opinions and experiences of girls across the globe. Everywhere the role of families and communities are critical to harnessing the leadership aspirations of girls and young women. They are influenced most by their immediate environment and look to their family members as role models and supporters and to release them from restrictive stereotyping. Whilst family support alone will not be enough to overcome the structured barriers to girls' and women's leadership, achieving progress and equal representation without it, is likely to be impossible.

What must be done

The girls and young women in the study know what will strengthen them in their leadership ambitions:

- Family backing is key: policy makers, community leaders and civil society organisations must **support families to value girls and champion their leadership ambitions.**

[1] All percentages in the executive summary have been rounded up or down to the nearest whole figure.

- Governments, the media and the corporate sector should, through example and public campaigning, **challenge sexism and discrimination at all levels.**
- **Transform the role of leadership**, to value collaboration and gender equality above hierarchy and control.
- Education authorities and funders must **provide girls with quality education and opportunities to strengthen their skills and knowledge.**
- **Crucially girls need role models and leadership experience:** governments, corporations and civil society organisations must encourage female leaders and mentors.

Only then will they be able to transcend the restrictions of the gendered expectations which surround them from birth to play their part as equals in their families, workplaces, communities and countries.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Taking the Lead seeks to understand and uncover girls' and young women's perspectives on what leadership is and should be, and the processes, enablers and barriers they face in realising their potential as leaders. This research, led by Plan International and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, cuts across economies, cultures and societies and includes the voices of over 10,000 girls and young women in 19 countries across the globe. This research seeks to contribute to filling the gap in understanding what it means for girls and young women from different contexts, economies, cultures and backgrounds to be leaders. Importantly it also seeks to uncover what encourages and discourages their leadership aspirations. It is part of an ongoing enquiry into girls' and young women's aspirations and pathways to leadership, with a second phase of the research planned to focus on the role of media in shaping such pathways.[2]

It is well established that throughout their lives, girls and women face a number of barriers to their active participation in civic life and, in particular, in positions of leadership. From gender norms and stereotypes, to institutional barriers, to a lack of investment in developing individual and collective capacity, girls and young women face wide-ranging discrimination that diminishes their self-confidence and restricts their ambition. This research seeks to gather a stronger, global understanding of these issues, based on the voices of girls and young women themselves.

In this section of the report, we outline the focus of the research and research questions, introduce the partners and provide a brief outline of key existing global literature on the topic, before going into detail on the methodology. The findings are presented in section 5 according to thematic analysis and the final section outlines the key conclusions and recommendations emerging from these findings.

2.1 Focus of the research

This research examines various dimensions of what leadership means and looks like to girls and young women - such as their aspirations and how they are formed and change over time. It looks at the role of gender norms in shaping girls' and young women's ambitions to become leaders. It also explores what leadership means to girls and young women in different country and cultural settings. Its findings offer a unique insight into girls' and young women's experiences on the road to leadership and equal representation, which lie at the heart of achieving gender equality.

Based on a review of existing literature, and the gaps in the existing evidence, the research questions for this part of the study are as follows:

[2] The second phase of this research will draw on this report and be supplemented by additional analysis of how leadership is portrayed by the media and what that means for girls and young women's leadership aspirations. It will be launched as State of the World Girls Report 2019 for International Day of the Girl, 11 October 2019.

1. **What factors encourage and discourage girls' and young women's leadership aspirations?**
   Seeking insights into the definitions of leadership; influences on aspirations and how they change over time; barriers and enablers to setting leadership goals.

2. **How do girls and young women become leaders?**
   Investigating perceived and actual pathways to leadership; perceived and actual advantages and disadvantages of being in a leadership position; the characteristics of leadership; catalysts for leadership.

The methodology and research tools were designed to generate findings around these two questions.

2.2 Partners

In 2018, Plan International and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (GDIGM) forged a unique partnership, drawing together their respective expertise in girls' rights, aspirations of girls and young women, and gender and the media. The research was conceived in June 2018 as a joint project, with Plan International leading on qualitative research components and GDIGM on the survey and media components. The partnership spans both phases of the research – this report and State of the World Girls Report 2019, to be released in October 2019.

2.3 Plan International

Plan International strives to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world. The organisation is an independent development and humanitarian organisation working alongside children, young people, supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children. Plan International drives change in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge. For over 85 years we have been building powerful partnerships for children, and we are active in over 75 countries.

In 2018, Plan International launched a new global campaign: Girls Get Equal. Girls Get Equal is campaigning in support of girls' power, freedom, representation and leadership. Its vision is a world where girls and young women, in all their diversity, are equally able to make decisions about their own lives and shape the world around them. Plan International is committed to using the findings from this research to feed into advocacy and programming at global, national and local levels in furtherance of the goals of Girls Get Equal.

2.4 Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media

The mission of the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media is to engage, educate, and influence media content creators, marketeers, and audiences about the importance of eliminating gender bias and stereotypes in media. To this end, the Institute is dedicated to intersectional analysis of representations of gender, race, ability, and sexuality. The Geena Davis Institute has amassed the largest body of research on gender prevalence in family entertainment, spanning more than twenty years. The Institute's research serves as the basis for education and outreach programmes that help families, studios, educators and content creators become critical consumers and producers.

3. SETTING THE SCENE ON FEMALE LEADERSHIP

Overall, a review of the literature reveals a gap in studies which look at how girls' and young women's aspirations for leadership are formed and the pathways they follow. There is currently a scarcity of global evidence identifying common factors that inhibit girls' and young women's leadership confidence and ambition in a range of different contexts. While data exists for rates of women's leadership across regions and countries, most of the studies on the barriers to women leaders – the 'why' of their

underrepresentation – focus on leadership in North American or European countries, or are focused on specific communities within a country. However, there are some studies which reveal useful contextual information or support hypotheses around girls and young women's leadership across domains – including in politics, education systems, peace-making processes and the private sector – and the relevant barriers and enablers. These studies provide a basis for this research and are examined briefly in this section of the report.

It is important to note that this is not a comprehensive literature review on the notion of female leadership. It has been undertaken to shed light on some of the thinking behind the defining factors of female leadership - its underlying philosophy, as well as the enablers and barriers. In addition, a variety of institutional factors that stall female leadership were not included in the literature review: sexual harassment in educational and workplace settings, lack of mentoring and sponsorship of women in corporate settings, lack of political party recruitment and training for female candidates.

3.1 Defining leadership

A core question of this research is focussed on how girls and young women themselves define and understand leadership and, therefore, this research has intentionally held back from defining leadership. However, understanding different approaches to interpreting leadership and what is required to become a leader is vital to interpreting our results.

Generally, leadership has been defined as a process involving individuals influencing or directing 'followers'[1]. Characteristics associated with leadership are often gendered,[2] with masculine management associated with qualities such as competitiveness, hierarchical authority, high control for the leader, and unemotional and analytic problem solving.[3] Often, such leadership characteristics counter traditional norms on the roles and characteristics of women and girls, who are expected to be submissive, nurturing and weak.[4] However, there is increasing discussion on 'feminine leadership', a term used to describe how women have demonstrated their abilities and skills to succeed through alternative means to the 'boys clubs'.[5] Despite recognising the importance of women and girls in becoming leaders, and how they have responded to and negotiated the entrenched structural barriers, the approach endorses harmful gender stereotypes about what women and girls are and should be as leaders.[6]

The concept of feminist leadership takes a different approach, prioritising collective power and decision-making, collaboration, cooperation and relationship building in leadership styles. Importantly, feminist leadership seeks to challenge gender inequality by harnessing shared, collective power, authority and decision-making – from girls and women in particular - in a common pursuit of social, political, economic and cultural equality.[7] This notion of leadership importantly differs from other leadership styles in its aim to scrutinise the gendered nature of power in the social, political, economic and technological realms and how this has served to exclude women and girls from power and authority in the public sphere.[8] Informed by the feminist lens, feminist leaders are skilled to identify and counteract the intersectional structures and processes of systemic discrimination, exclusion and subjugation of others – particularly girls and women.

"Empowering girls, boys and youth as active drivers of change" is one of Plan International's key priority areas. This approach focuses on girls' individual and collective power and celebrating youth-led activism for gender equality. Through this work, Plan International aims to galvanise support to realise and strengthen girls' agency and collective action, interconnect young people's change initiatives, and catalyse them to influence decision makers and institutions, while contributing to shift norms and behaviours so that public opinion sees girls as critical drivers of social and political change. Being part of and supporting existing movements of young, and particularly female, advocates, activists and campaigners means that our work is driven by the agenda of those for whom political change matters most.

Promoting young female leadership is also core to Girls Get Equal - the campaigns component of Plan International's priority area "Empowering girls, boys and youth as active drivers of change". While this aim of the campaign includes access to formal positions of power and authority, such as increasing the numbers of young women and girls in decision-making roles in public life, it also looks beyond this. The campaign seeks to redefine leadership to better reflect how girls, young women and young advocates and activists are choosing to lead. The campaign will work with them to redefine the concept so that leadership is collaborative, gender transformative and inclusive. It means not reinforcing a narrow male-

defined set of leadership skills and behaviours or replicating the male-dominated power and leadership structures that currently exist. Throughout the campaign there will be ongoing research and partnering with girls and young women to fully understand what it means to them to be a driver and facilitator of change.

3.2 Rates of women in political and private sector leadership

There remains a considerable under-representation of women in leadership positions globally, in both politics and the private sector.

Globally, men outnumber women three-to-one when it comes to legislative seats, with only 23% of national parliamentarian seats held by women.[9] In 38 states (out of 195), women constitute less than 10% of parliamentarians.[10] Table 1 breaks down the rates by region, showing that women hold less than 20% of parliamentary seats in Asia, Middle East and North Africa and the Pacific. As of January 2019, only three countries had achieved gender parity in parliament – Rwanda with 61% women, and Cuba and Bolivia both with 53%. There is also an intersection with age and gender in the underrepresentation of women in senior positions of political power and throughout political structures. Whilst less than 1.6% of the world's parliamentarians are under the age of 30, there is a 60:40 ratio of men to women.[11]

Table 1: Percentage of Women in National Parliaments, as at January 2019, by Region[12]

Location	% of women in national parliaments
Americas	30.7%
Europe	28.5%
Sub-Saharan Africa	23.7%
Asia	19.6%
Middle East and North Africa	18.1%
Pacific	18.4%

According to research from Catalyst in 2018, just 24% of senior corporate roles were held by women, a decline from previous years.[13] In terms of senior management positions, research by Grant Thornton shows progress in women accessing these roles: in 2018 it was reported that 75% of businesses across the globe have at least one woman in senior management,[14] while in 2019 this has risen with the regions that have the lowest representation of at least one women in these roles are Latin America and Southern Europe.[15]

Table 2: Women and Senior Leadership by Region (March 2019) [16]

Location	% of businesses with at least one woman in senior management	% of senior roles held by women
Africa	94%	31%
ASEAN	94%	28%
Asia-Pacific	85%	28%
Eastern Europe	85%	32%
EU	84%	28%

Southern Europe	83%	26%
Latin America	83%	25%
North America	92%	31%

Women's underrepresentation in the corporate sphere has persisted, despite a decade of evidence that gender diversity at the highest levels is linked to higher profits.[17]

3.3 Pathways to leadership

This section examines how perceptions of leadership and role incongruity (i.e. expectations that women should not be leaders) play out in relation to the experiences of girls and women.

3.3.1 Stereotypes and sexism

Across many cultures, the characteristics that are associated with being a leader are the same character traits that societies associate with men (controlling, dominant, forceful, assertive),[18] while the communal characteristics that societies associate with women (affection, sympathy, nurturing, and helpfulness) are not aligned with ideas of leadership.[19] When asked to describe leaders, most people use masculine terms.[20] Across the globe, feminine characteristics are viewed as appropriate for caretaking, while masculine characteristics are seen as better suited to the world of business and politics.[21] In line with these gender norms, girls from all over the globe report behaviour such as downplaying their physical and intellectual abilities to avoid being perceived as masculine.[22] This means that, in all domains, men are viewed as "default leaders," while women are seen as "atypical leaders."[23] Traditional gender role expectations discourage girls from seeking leadership positions, and produce prejudice against female leadership.[24]

Discrimination in the workplace presents itself in terms of the types of jobs women do and how much they are paid. As a result of underemployment and gender wage discrimination, women are more likely to be classed as working poor.[25] Even when legislation protects equal opportunities and equal pay, women are more likely to work in sectors which pay less and are less stable.[26] Agriculture remains the most important source of employment for women in low and lower middle income countries and, in high income countries, almost one third of women in the labour market, work in the health and education sectors.[27] This "occupational segregation" is fed by stereotypes about suitable pursuits for men and women, and those who defy the gendered expectations face barriers, discrimination and stigma.[28] According to a recent study by the World Bank, 2.7 billion women in the world are legally restricted from having the same choice of jobs as men.[29]

In contrast, a study of approximately 22,000 companies in 91 countries finds that companies with female CEOs produce higher profits, and that having women in top leadership positions significantly increases revenue.[30] But even where women are in leadership positions, they are consistently evaluated more negatively than male leaders. Schneider and Bos find that when women seek positions of power, they are "punished" for going against gender stereotypes,[31] and that "female politicians are defined more by their deficits than their strengths."[32] Female bosses are evaluated using a harsher standard, so people evaluate female leaders more negatively than men and consistently perceive women as lacking key leadership skills.[33] Moreover, highly accomplished women are supposed to be modest and are seen in a negative light if they tout their accomplishments.[34]

One foundational bias is the "double-bind" where female leaders are "damned if they do and damned if they don't" when it comes to displaying masculine leadership traits.[35] Female political leaders have to "act masculine" to be seen as effective leaders, but in doing so, they are "punished" for not being "properly feminine." In the corporate sphere, female leaders who act in stereotypically feminine ways (e.g., express concern for others and emphasise building good relationships) are rated as less competent, but if they act "male" (e.g., task-oriented, ambitious, and assertive), they are rated negatively for being "too tough."[36]

This bias against female leadership emerges at a young age. In a study of teens in the USA, Weissbourd finds that both boys and girls hold conscious and unconscious biases against women in leadership roles.[37] They are more likely to prefer men for leadership in politics and business. As adults, both men

and women continue to prefer male bosses over female bosses.[38] This bias persists, even though many people are aware that female leaders are judged more harshly than male leaders. In a Pew study of people in the USA, 40% believe that female leaders are held to a higher standard than male leaders, and about two-thirds believe that it is easier for men to get into the top political and corporate positions than women.[39]

3.3.2 Aspirations, barriers and enablers

Gender stereotypes distort girls' and young women's confidence when it comes to leadership abilities. Girls and women have significantly lower self-confidence than boys and men in different nations, and this gap grows remarkably wide between the ages of four and fourteen.[40] By the time they are in their teens, boys have significantly higher confidence in their leadership abilities than girls.[41] The confidence gap is even larger in male-dominated activities, like business and politics, where most people over-estimate men's abilities and under-estimate women's abilities.[42] Weissbourd, in his study with teenagers in the USA, asked why girls lack confidence in their own leadership abilities and the leadership abilities of other girls.[43] They identified many factors lowering their confidence, including parental expectations and gender stereotypes they confront from peers and school.

Girls learn at an early age that it is not appropriate for them to be ambitious. Studies confirm that boys and girls have similar levels of ambition when they are young, but girls grow into women with significantly less ambition as they internalise gender role expectations.[44] For instance, girls in the Global South are often socialised to remain docile and subservient to men, in order to prove that they are "good girls."[45] It has also been argued that girls receive less external encouragement and recognition for being ambitious, and, as a result, they learn that this desire will not be rewarded.[46] Instead, many women settle for "recognition by proxy" through attention for their physical attractiveness or the accomplishments of their husband or children. A girl's childhood ambition of becoming a member of parliament or the CEO of a company are eventually forgotten and replaced with pursuits that are more conventional.[47]

Boys also receive more encouragement to be politically ambitious from their family, friends, and peers, and adult men receive significantly more encouragement to run for public office from their support network than women do.[48] Family encouragement is especially important— encouragement increases the likelihood of political ambition by 43%.[49]

Societal cues and encouragement translate into men having significantly higher rates of political and professional ambition than women do.[50] In the USA, a country with relatively few women in political leadership, teenage boys are significantly more likely to have considered running for office than teenage girls (15% compared to 9%),[51] and in adulthood, warped perception of skills leads to women thinking they are less qualified to run for political office than men with the same or similar qualifications.[52]

According to a 2017 KMPG study of women in the USA, young women become leaders if they receive encouragement from friends and family.[53] Within their community, girls' encouraged to become leaders by the people in their lives (peers, teachers and parents) sets the right expectation for them (i.e. that they can and should lead) and rewards their leadership pursuits accordingly. In a 2017 study in Palestine, Hamad, Gercama and Jones found that girls encouraged one another to take education seriously and motivated other girls who were thinking of discontinuing their education.[54] Additionally, Gerard and Booth concluded that parental academic support is linked to greater academic expectations for female adolescents.[55]

The visibility of women in powerful positions is also an important factor: multiple studies find that girls are more likely to have leadership ambition if they have a role model who is a female leader.[56] In a study that examines adolescents aged eleven to fifteen, Beaman *et al*. discover that the gender gap in adolescents' career aspirations closed by 32% in Indian villages that are female-led after two election cycles, when compared to villages that do not hold leadership positions specifically for women.[57]

Visibility of women leaders in media is also a factor in shaping girls' and women's perceptions of leadership. Media is one of the primary ways children learn that ambition is acceptable for boys, but not for girls. According to the Weissbourd study, media that denigrates female leadership discourages girls' leadership confidence and ambition. Previous research conducted by the Geena Davis Institute finds that media shape perceptions of who can be an authentic leader, and in most cases, this means men. In the only global study of entertainment media portrayals of leadership, the Institute found that most leaders are men in corporate (86%), political (91%), religious (100%), and academic (71%) settings. The fact that

so few women are portrayed as leaders in popular entertainment sends a clear signal to girls that leadership is a male domain.[58]

3.3.3 Experience

The ambition gap is directly caused by a lack of recognition and encouragement of leadership abilities. Studies in the USA have found that teachers give boys more encouragement than girls to participate in competitive activities, such as student government and debate,[59] and children who engage in competitive activities have more confidence and interest in leadership than others do. Again, these studies examine the more general or typical definitions of leadership.

Archard conducted a study with girls in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the U.K., and found that girls have more leadership ambition when they are given opportunities to practice and develop leadership skills.[60] There is also evidence to suggest that one way of providing leadership experience and opportunities is through collective action and activism, which enables girls and young women to exercise and explore different styles of leadership.[61] Civic action gives girls and young women the skill sets, confidence and experience to then pursue their leadership ambitions – whether at home or in the local community, within boardrooms or in parliament. Investing in activism means investing in young female leadership.

4. METHODOLOGY

This research sought to capture the voice and perspective of girls and young women and their own understanding of leadership and potential pathways and barriers to becoming leaders themselves. However, it was also important to have a global overview of these issues, allowing comparability between different types of countries and contexts. Countries were selected at random from within regional and income categories. Plan International has offices in all participating countries. A mixed methods approach was applied: a quantitative survey in 19 countries and in-depth, participatory focus group discussions (FGDs) in a sub-set of five of those countries (see Box 1). Girls and young women aged 15-24 were the target in both approaches, capturing perspectives across the breadth of different contexts whilst enabling discussions on the complex and nuanced aspects of the research questions. However, for reasons which are undetermined, the survey data included responses from 317 25-year-olds. The research includes all the survey responses in the analysis. In this section, we provide an overview of the methodology, with further details outlined in Annex 1.

Box 1. Countries in which the research took place

Survey: Benin, Canada, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Finland, Honduras, India, Japan, Netherlands, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sweden, Vietnam, Uganda, USA, Zimbabwe.

Focus group discussions: Dominican Republic, India, Japan, Senegal, South Sudan

4.1 Data collection tools and processes

4.1.1 Survey

The target sample for the survey was 500 girls and young women per country, and overall 10,064 responses were received from across the nineteen countries. The survey included 10 closed questions on aspirations to lead, experience of leading, confidence, encouragement, role models and discrimination (see Annex 2 for the full survey). Five demographic questions were included to allow more in-depth analysis. The survey was delivered through online and SMS modalities using two survey firms, Kantar and Ipsos Mori. In addition, Kantar used two alternative methods of data collection following low response rate from SMS in some countries: Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI), and Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

4.1.2 FGDs

Twelve FGDs were carried out in each of the five selected countries, with commonly between 6-8 participants aged 15-24 in each, 413 in total across the five countries. In most countries FGDs were carried out in a mixture of urban and rural locations and the girls were from mixed backgrounds. The FGDs were centred around two key activities: (i) 'body mapping' to understand perspectives on characteristics and experience of a young female leader, and (ii) an activity to gauge the main sources of influence and inspiration in the lives of girls and young women. The FGDs were designed with the intent of understanding how girls and young women themselves perceived leadership in their own contexts. The FGD tool was developed in consultation with young people and adapted for each country context. Appropriate local researchers were identified to facilitate and lead FGDs after taking part in an intensive, practical training run by Plan International. The research tool used for the FGDs is included in Annex 3.

4.2 Analysis

The analysis framework was designed in order to unpack the key research questions as stated above. Recognising that in order for young women to become leaders they need to aspire to and achieve their goals. In doing so they need to overcome the gender norms and structures which limit their vision of the possibilities awaiting them. The research therefore set out to understand whether they aspire to leadership and the common barriers, pathways and enabling factors. The quantitative data from the survey was analysed using SPSS and Stata and the qualitative data was analysed using NVivo. The combined analysis framework presented below represents the top-level coding themes, according to which this report is structured.

Table 3: Top level analysis framework

	Aspirations to leadership	Characteristics and qualities of leadership	Motivations to become leaders	Barriers to leadership	Enablers to leadership	Level of experience of leadership
Quant	X			X	X	X
Qual		X	X	X	X	X

4.3 Ethics

Plan International has considerable experience working with and conducting research with children and young people, and follow strict protocols on safeguarding and ethics. All processes in this research aligned to Plan International's *Framework for Ethical Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL)*. In addition, an external ethics check was sought from independent child rights academics who approved all research within the project. In Senegal and South Sudan appropriate national and local ethical approval and permissions were obtained prior to data collection starting.

Participatory tools were designed to minimise risks to participants, avoiding traumatic or sensitive topics and risks of disclosure. The firms responsible for survey delivery also followed specific guidelines and international standards on research ethics, including obtaining permission to operate and conduct such surveys in each country. Survey participants were given the option to opt-in after being given details of the survey, and participants under 18 were required to seek parental approval. For the five countries in which FGDs were carried out, informed consent was gathered for all participants prior to the start of data collection, including from parents/guardians for those under eighteen and unmarried. Researchers were trained on informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and safeguarding procedures. In all FGDs with the exception of Senegal, research teams were all female; in Senegal, for reasons of capacity, male notetakers were present whilst female researchers led discussions.

4.4 Research Limitations

There are several limitations that must be considered, stemming from modalities, variations between countries and ethics. Firstly, due to ethical considerations and challenges with accessing younger children, especially using technology, this research project was only conducted with 15-25-year olds. Therefore, it does not tell us about girls in early adolescence where many critical challenges may be taking place.

The survey was only able to reach girls and young women who were literate and had access to technology and therefore would not have reached the most marginalised girls and young women. As a result, the findings are not generalisable across whole populations. Additionally, the survey only asked fifteen short, concise and closed questions which did not allow exploration into the nuances of leadership or follow-up on specific issues. However, these nuances emerged in the qualitative data. Finally, as the survey was administered remotely using online, telephone and SMS modalities, it is not possible to verify that all respondents were definitely female and within the 15-25-year-old age range, although there were requirements to confirm gender and age at the start of the survey.

Recruitment methods for the FGDs varied across countries. In all countries except for Japan, and to varying degrees, participants had access to Plan International programming. These participants are, therefore, likely to have an increased awareness of issues around gender equality. Levels of experience and confidence in facilitation and notetaking skills varied considerably between the researchers engaged as data collectors across all five countries and sometimes within countries. Whilst all FGDs were audio recorded, there was some variation in the quality of the transcriptions and the translations into English. Similarly when using translation, many times the original or cultural forms of expression used by a research participant can be lost in the translation process. Lastly, FGDs are inherently limited when in comes to generalisability based on the small number of participants involved.

For further detail on limitations, refer to Annex 1.

5. FINDINGS

In this main report we present the global findings under thematic analysis, incorporating data from the survey and the focus group discussions in an integrated way. Analysis from the survey is presented alongside significant and interesting trends, and variations between the five participating countries, emerging from the qualitative data.

Due to the its nuanced nature, the different aspects of leadership were not captured in the survey. Therefore, sections 5.2 – 5.3 are centred on findings from the focus group discussions in the sub-set of five countries to give substance to the concept of leadership before moving into what the barriers and enablers to leadership are.

5.1 Leadership aspirations of girls and young women

At the outset it was important to establish whether girls and young women actually want to assume leadership roles. Significantly, it was found that 76.3% of them do.

The survey measured girls and young women's aspirations for leadership in their careers, in politics, and in the household. Overall, a large majority of respondents (59.3%) say they would like to be a leader in their career or job. This high rate of career leadership aspiration is encouraging for moving more women into leadership positions in the workplace. Girls and young women have a steep drop-off when it comes to aspiration for political leadership on a national or local level. Only one-in-five girls and young women say they would like to be a leader in their country (20.6%) or their community (19.3%). This means that a major barrier to advancing women's political leadership is that girls' and young women are not seeking leadership positions. When it comes to leadership within their family, only 22.5% of girls and young women aspire to this.

Table 4: Leadership aspirations

Domain	Percentage	(n)
Career or Job	59.3%	5,972
Country	20.6%	2,078
Community	19.3%	1,994
Family	22.5%	2,260

Alongside this finding is that the number one reason to pursue leadership is to affect change. This is discussed in detail later in the report, but it is important to point out that girls and young women have not identified power or increasing their social status as a motivator for becoming a leader.

5.1.1 Leadership Aspirations by Background

Aspirations to be a workplace leader decreases with age but increases with education. Two-thirds (67.1%) of girls who have gone to tertiary education say they want to be a leader in their workplace compared to 58.4% of those who completed high school, 42.4% of those who completed primary school, and 31.6% of girls who have not completed any schooling.

These findings also fit with findings from the qualitative data that strongly suggest girls' aspirations decreased with age, and if and once they enter the adult world:

"I went to a girl's high school and a girl's university, where all the students were girls. There I took a position of a leader without any hesitation. Girls were very positive and powerful in those communities. At that time, I thought that the future would be bright. However, I started working, I found that gender problems are deeply rooted. Most of the leaders are men. There is a woman who is an assistant manager in my company. But she is disliked by her colleagues. They think she is too self-assertive." – Young woman, aged 18-24, Japan

Study respondents were asked to self-identify their level of education, jobs and money (referred to throughout this report as 'social standing'. This was done on a scale ranging from self-identified high levels of education, jobs and money through to midpoint and low levels. 62.3 % of girls and young women who self-identify as having high levels of education, jobs or wealth said they wanted to be a leader in the workplace. This figure was slightly higher than girls and young women who self-assessed themselves at the midpoint (60.6%), and also higher for those who self-assessed at the bottom point. Girls and young women who are not married (60.7%) are significantly more likely to say they want to be a leader in their job or workplace than girls or young women who are married (50.3%).

In terms of aspiring to a leadership position in one's country, this decreases with age, does not vary by level of formal education reached, and increases with marriage. Girls and young women who self-identified as having high levels education, jobs or wealth (29.5%) are far more likely to aspire to be a leader in their country than girls in the middle (18.8%) or bottom (14.4%). Girls and young women who are married are more likely to want to be a leader in their country than girls who are not (28.0% compared to 20.3%). Again, the reasons behind these findings are not available from the data and were not specifically investigated in the study. In addition, it is important to point out that because the survey captured the voices of 25-year-olds, albeit a very small sample (n=317), it appears that at 25 aspirations start to increase again. However, arguably, the sample size is too small to draw reliable conclusions from and should be discarded.

Aspiration for community leadership does not vary by education or marital status, but girls and young women who self – identified as having of higher education, jobs and wealth (21.8%) and middle (19.5%) are more likely to aspire to this than girls and young women who self-assessed at the bottom point (15.3%). Also, aspirations for community leadership decline with age.

The desire to be a leader in the family is the same across age, education level, and social standing. However, girls who are married are significantly more likely to want to be a leader in their family than girls who are not married (28.9% compared to 21.0%). Similar to the above, there has not been further

exploration of these findings and these are issues that could be interrogated in further studies at a local rather than global level.

Table 5: Leadership aspirations by age

	Career		Country		Community		Family	
Age	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**
15-year-olds	61.4%	721	25.7%	721	27.3%	721	23.0%	721
24-year-olds	57.2%	1124	21.0%	1124	18.3%	1124	24.6%	1124

Table 6: Leadership aspirations according to domain and level of education

	Career		Country		Community		Family	
Education	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**
None	31.6%	62	23.5%	46	16.8%	33	24.5%	48
Primary	42.4%	484	21.3%	243	14.8%	169	16.8%	192
Secondary	58.4%	2,894	20.2%	998	20.5%	1,017	24.0%	1,188
Tertiary	67.1%	2,532	21.0%	791	19.2%	725	22.0%	832

Table 7: Leadership aspirations according to self-defined levels of education, jobs and money.

	Career		Country		Community		Family	
Social status	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**
Towards the Bottom	51.0%	885	14.4%	249	15.3%	265	20.2%	351
In the Middle	60.6%	3,549	18.8%	1,101	19.5%	1,142	23.3%	1,364
Towards the Top	62.3%	1,536	29.5%	728	21.8%	537	22.1%	544

Table 8: Leadership aspirations according to marital status

	Career		Country		Community		Family	
Social status	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**
Not married	60.7%	5,015	20.3%	1,676	18.7%	1,548	21.0%	1,733
Married	50.3%	653	28.0%	364	21.7%	282	28.9%	376

5.1.2 Leadership Aspirations by Region

The leadership aspirations of girls and young women were also analysed across geographical regions. Girls and young women in Latin America are the most likely to want to be a leader in their career (70.2%), followed by those in Asia (64.3%), North American (60.9%), Europe (60.5%), and West & Central Africa (56.5%). About one-third (37.5%) of girls and young women in East & Southern Africa want to be a leader in their career or job. These remarkably high rates of interest in job leadership indicate that the global underrepresentation of women leaders in the workplace is not due to a lack of interest. It is also noteworthy that the regional representation of aspirations for leadership in terms of career or job stand at odds with the regional reality of women in senior leadership roles in business reflected in Table 2 above.

When it comes to wanting to be a leader in their country, nearly half of girls in West & Central Africa (46.4%) report this-- far more than girls in other regions. One-in-three girls (31.4%) in East & Southern Africa want to be a leader in their country, while one-in-five want to be a leader in Latin American (20.3%) and Asian (17.0%) countries. Only a small percentage of girls in North America (7.9%) and Europe (5.8%) want to be leaders in their country.

In terms of being a leader in their community, girls in West & Central Africa (29.7%) are the most likely to report this, followed by girls in East & Southern Africa (24.8%), North America (23.7%), Asia (19.4%), and Latin America (16.4%). Far fewer girls say they want to be community leaders in the European countries in our study (8.0%).

One-third of girls in West & Central Africa (34.4%) and North America (30.2%) say they want to be a leader in their family, while one-in-five girls in Latin America (22.3%) and Asia (19.5%) report the same. Fewer girls in Europe (16.7%) and East & Southern Africa (16.4%) say they aspire to be a leader in their family.

Table 9: Leadership aspirations according to region

	Career		Country		Community		Family	
Region	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**
West & Central Africa	56.5%	848	46.4%	696	29.7%	446	34.4%	516
East & Southern Africa	37.5%	522	31.4%	437	24.8%	346	16.4%	228
Asia	64.3%	1,364	17.0%	360	19.4%	412	19.5%	414
Europe	60.5%	1,242	5.8%	120	8.0%	165	16.7%	343
North America	60.9%	705	7.9%	91	23.7%	274	30.2%	349
Latin America	70.2%	1,291	20.3%	374	16.4%	301	22.3%	410

5.1.3 Leadership Aspirations by Country Income Classification

In addition to geographic analysis, girls' and young women's leadership aspirations were also analysed according to high-, middle-, and low-income country classifications. About half of girls in low-income countries (47.4%) aspire to be a leader in their career or work, while 72.7% of girls in middle-income countries aspire to this. Over half of girls in high-income countries (56.4%) say they want to be a leader in their career.

Girls in low-income countries (39.2%) have the highest rates of aspiring to be a leader in their country compared to middle-income (19.6%) and high-income (7.3%) countries. A similar pattern is found with community leadership. Girls from low-income countries (27.4%) are more likely than girls from middle-income (18.1%) or high-income (14.2%) countries to aspire to be community leaders. Girls in low-income countries (25.7%) are also more likely than girls in middle-income (23.0%) and upper-income (19.5%) countries to report that they aspire to be a leader in their family.

The above findings suggest that girls and young women from lower income countries have greater leadership aspirations all round (except in the workplace), much greater than girls in high income countries. Understanding why these patterns emerge from the analysis of the data according to country income levels would be important in order to understand the more nuanced enablers, barriers and opportunities relating to leadership for girls and young women in these territories.

Table 10: Leadership aspirations according to country income level

	Career		Country		Community		Family	
Income level	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**	**%**	**(n)**
Low Income	47.4%	1,370	39.2%	1133	27.4%	792	25.7%	744
Medium Income	72.7%	2,489	19.6%	672	18.1%	619	23.0%	787
High Income	56.4%	2,113	7.3%	273	14.2%	533	19.5%	729

5.1.4 Predictors and deterrents to leadership aspirations

Analysis from the survey provided valuable insights about predictors and deterrents to girls' and young women's leadership aspirations in relation to her family, community, career and country. These findings demonstrate the role that various factors play such as age, perceptions of gender discrimination, education and leadership experience. The insights are important for understanding how different factors and circumstances combine to influence girls and young women's perceptions of and engagement with leadership. What emerges below are findings and contradictions that may be explained by further analysis at an in-depth country level (which was not within the scope of this report) and additional comparative studies, but please note that no causal relationship is meant to be inferred between the different variables.

Box 2: Predictors and deterrents of leadership aspirations

Factors that discourage girls and young women's leadership ambitions

The factors that lower aspirations for a **leadership position in the workplace**:

- *Age*: As girls get older, their aspiration to be a leader in the workplace declines.
- *Perceptions of Sexism*: The more a girl or young woman believes women leaders have to work harder for the same respect as men leaders, the lower her aspiration for a leadership position in the workplace.
- *Perceptions of Leaders and Mothers*: The more a girl or young woman believes that women leaders make bad mothers, the less she aspires to be a leader in her job.

The factors that lower girls' aspirations for a **leadership position in their country**:

- *Age*: As girls get older, their aspiration to be a leader in their country declines.
- *Perceptions of Leaders and Mothers*: The more a girl or young woman believes that women leaders make bad mothers, the less she aspires to be a leader in her country.
- *Unwanted Physical Contact*: The more a girl or young woman believes women leaders experience unwanted physical contact, the less likely she is to aspire to be a leader in her country.

The factors that lower aspirations for a **leadership position in their community**:

- *Age*: As girls get older, their aspiration to be a leader in their community declines.
- *Perceptions of Sexism*: Girls and young woman who believe that women leaders are treated less well because of their gender are less likely to aspire to being leaders in their community.

The factors that lower girls' aspirations for a **leadership position in their family**:

- *Marriage*: Girls and young women who are married are more likely to want to be a leader in their family than girls who are not married.
- *Perceptions of Sexism*: The more a girl or young woman believes women leaders have to work harder for the same respect as men leaders, the lower her aspiration for a leadership position in her family.
- *Perceptions of Leaders and Mothers*: The more a girl or young woman believes that women leaders make bad mothers, the less she aspires to be a leader in her family.

Factors that encourage girls' and young women's leadership aspirations

The factors that increase aspirations for a **leadership position in the workplace**:

- *Education*: The higher the level of education level, the higher the aspiration for a leadership position in the workplace.
- *Self-identified levels of education, jobs and wealth:* Girls and young women with higher levels are more likely to aspire to a workplace leadership position.
- *Marriage*: Girls and young women who are *not* married are more likely to aspire to a leadership position in the workplace.
- *Leadership Experience*: The more leadership experience a girl or young woman has, the more likely she is to want to be a leader in her career or job.
- *Encouragement*: The greater the encouragement a girl or young woman receives to be a leader, the greater the likelihood she aspires to be a leader in the workplace.
- *Role Models*: Girls and young women with more women leaders as role models in their community and in media are more likely to aspire to leadership in their job.

Below are the factors that increase girls' and young women's aspirations for a **leadership position in their country**:

- *Self-identified levels of education, jobs and wealth*: Girls with higher social standing are more likely to aspire to a leadership position in their country.
- *Marriage*: Girls who are married are more likely to aspire to a leadership position in their country than girls who are not married.
- *Leadership Experience*: The more leadership experience a girl has, the more likely she is to want to be a leader in her country.
- *Encouragement*: The greater the encouragement a girl receives to be a leader, the greater the likelihood she aspires to be a leader in her country.
- *Role Models*: Girls with more women leaders as role models in their community and in media are more likely to aspire to a leadership position in their country.

These factors encourage girls' and young women's aspirations for a **leadership position in their community**:

- *Self-defined levels of education, jobs and wealth*: Girls and young women with high levels are more likely to aspire to a leadership position in their community.
- *Leadership Experience*: The more leadership experience a girl or young woman has, the more likely she is to want to be a leader in her community.
- *Encouragement*: The more the encouragement a girl or young woman receives to be a leader, the greater the likelihood she aspires to be a leader in her community.
- *Role Models*: Girls and young women with women leaders as role models in their community and in media are more likely to aspire to a leadership position in their community.

Here is the one significant factor out of all the factors examined that increases girls' and young women's aspirations for a **leadership position in their family**:

- *Role Models*: Girls and young women with women leaders as role models in their community are more likely to aspire to a leadership position in their family.

5.2 The local verses global nature of leadership

In discussing leadership with the girls and young women in the focus group discussions, there was a deliberate decision not to present them with a definition of leadership in order to surface an understanding of how girls and young women themselves defined leadership in their own contexts. What emerged were interesting distinctions between the global, national and local (national or community) nature of leadership. Overwhelmingly across all five countries participating in focus group discussions, the fundamental characteristics, qualities and motivations identified were similar for both global or local leaders. In response to the direct question 'is there a difference between global and local leaders?' girls and young women said that the only main differences are that of knowledge, responsibility and influence – with global leaders having a wider knowledge, influence and level of responsibility than local leaders.

Participants discussed particular images and individuals that they associate with 'leaders' and the responses were a mixture of global, national and community leaders. Interestingly, more women than men were identified by girls and young women in response to this exercise (although this may have been because female leadership was the primary subject of the focus group discussion).

"*A local leader has knowledge of local issues only. They all work for the society or the country. National or international leaders have knowledge of the national and international issues.*" – Girl, aged 15-17, India

"*Leadership is an ability to lead, set a good example, and give the best of oneself to serve people: the difference is not very interesting […] there is not much difference because it's only about the levels which are not the same. Nothing can change the fact of being a leader and we can become one in several areas; can be a worldwide leader who leads several people while a community or family leader leads very few people but they both have the same role and that is to be promoted.*" – Young woman, aged 18-20, Senegal

"*I think there is no difference [between local and global] because they all have the same goals that is to move their group forward*." – Young woman, aged 18-24, Senegal

"*Global leaders and community leaders are the same because all lead the people*." – Young woman, aged 21-24, South Sudan

Throughout the focus group activities and discussion, participants interpreted 'leadership' within their own contexts. Whilst all five countries agreed there were no significant differences between global and local leaders when the question was posed directly, when describing the characteristics and qualities of young female leadership during the activities, there were notable differences. Participants in Senegal, India, South Sudan and the Dominican Republic veered towards a local and community understanding of leadership (with Senegal also describing a national context), whereas generally participants from Japan described a more global interpretation of leadership:

"The leader's will to achieve the goal in the end makes others follow the leader and contribute to the world." – Young woman, aged 21-24, Japan

We suggest that the findings presented throughout this report in relation to the sub-set of five countries where the focus group discussions were conducted should be interpreted in the context of these regional differences described above. Nonetheless, there are nuances at the individual level between countries and these should be seen as indicative of the different perspectives that girls and young women have more generally.

5.3 Characteristics and qualities of leadership

Overall, the findings from the qualitative data demonstrate that girls and young women identify with the characteristics of leadership that emphasise community, shared power and collective decision making – all in the pursuit of social justice and change.

The body mapping activity and follow up questions employed in the focus group discussions asked girls and young women to discuss and identify the qualities and characteristics of a non-specific 'young female leader'. In most focus group discussions this was interpreted by participants as being *ideal* characteristics

and qualities of a young female leader as opposed to ones that were attributed to actual leaders. Listed in order of prevalence, the four most common characteristics and qualities identified by girls and young women were:

- Helping and developing their community, making change
- Working to advance gender equality and women's and girls' rights
- Kindness, fairness, consideration and compassion
- A way with words.

Each is discussed in detail below.

5.3.1 Driving change in the community

Leadership was seen by the girls and young women as being inextricably linked to their community. By far the most cited characteristics of leadership fell under the category of helping, developing and advancing one's community and country.

"*She sees her community as the best, in the future it will grow with more education and respect, she sees progress for us."* – Young woman, aged 18-22, Dominican Republic

"*A good leader will always think about her people*." – Girl, aged 15-17, South Sudan

"I think that a woman leader should see a community with its problems, but we should also all work together and she should advise us so that we improve, for the community to progress and overcome its problems, by finding what we need." – Girl, aged 15, Dominican Republic

These qualities included being able to listen to, understand and relate to the community, including listening and respecting differing opinions; identifying and responding to community need, giving advice and guidance and championing and campaigning on behalf of the community. These findings support a type of collaborative leadership in terms of an emphasis on shared, collective power, authority and decision-making in pursuit of social, political, economic and cultural equality.[62]

"If the leader has a strong vision it's a good thing to pursue it. But if you go headlong into it without listening to others, no one could follow such a leader. If a leader wants to get the members to cooperate, she needs to care for and listen to others and take their opinions into consideration before taking action." – Girl, aged 15-17, Japan

"A leader should give good advice. Her words should go with what she defends and advocates." –Young woman, aged 18-19, Senegal

"She has to know what the community needs, the problems we have here, she has to speak to the people, I don't know, she should speak to them to find out what their needs are, so she can try and get help, find solutions to the problems." – Young woman, aged 15-21, Dominican Republic

The second element identified by girls and young women in this category was the ability of leaders to be change-makers. Overwhelmingly across all five countries, participants thought that young female leaders should be change-makers within communities and identified areas of change specific to their own contexts. In Japan, change tended to be phrased as wider social change rather than community change. Across all five countries, the most common areas in which participants thought a young female leader should engage and strive for change were:

(i) Peace, unity, stability: Across all five countries the notion of a young female leader striving to bring peace and unity to her community emerged, to varying degrees. This was particularly prevalent in South Sudan, the only conflict and humanitarian context in this research, where there were over twice as many mentions of peace than in the other countries.

"She shares the message of peace, she speaks out against the problem facing the community, she speaks of conflict problem, she speaks of human rights as a leader." – Young woman, aged 18-20, South Sudan

"Whenever she gets up, she has to go for peace (Salam), that is, to be worthy of not spreading terror." – Young woman, aged 18-20, Senegal

(ii) Education and employment: (improving and advancing opportunities for) education and employment was mentioned in every country except Japan and was particularly important in India and South Sudan.

"She wants to give free education to all the children whether girl or boy and she wants to work for the unemployment of the youth of her community." – Girl, aged 15-17, India

"She helps us to study, not to miss out on opportunities, she is always by our side and when we're losing interest and are no longer so motivated, then she approaches us and talks to us so that we don't leave school, and she tells us that it's an opportunity we shouldn't miss, she advises us not to leave school, because if we don't get qualifications we won't be able to succeed and be a little bit less poor." – Young woman, aged 18-22, Dominican Republic

(iv) Environment and natural resources: improving the environment in her community, from addressing littering through to ensuring access to clean water and electricity, was particularly prominent in India, where environmental concerns were mentioned eight times more than they were mentioned in any of the other five countries. We do not have the data to answer why this is so, but we can speculate that the regions in which Plan works in India have environmental problems that are of such significance to the everyday realities of the participants in the FGDs that a finding of this scale is possible.

"A young female leader should take part in the cleanliness drive of her community" Girl, aged 15-17, India

"To resolve the community's problems, water, electricity, rubbish, to stop people from throwing rubbish in the street, to organise for us to have a clean and organised community, the woman leader works for that." – Young woman, aged 15-18, Dominican Republic

(v) Social equality and ending discrimination: the themes of treating others equally, identifying and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised in society, and ending discrimination based on individual characteristics including gender, ethnicity, social standing, economic status, caste, region and disability, were mentioned frequently in three out of five countries:

"A women young leader needs to listen to the poorest community at first." – Girl, aged 15-17, India

"She sees an equal society without discrimination. She wants to stop discrimination based on gender, disabilities, and race. This is her ideal future." – Girl, aged 15-17, Japan

(vi) Being able to identify with children and young people: girls and young women across the five countries called out the ability to connect with the young as a critical aspect of leadership. They said that leaders should engage with young people as the next generation and the future drivers of change.

"She should help others and advise young people, because she is young, so she is familiar with young people's problems and can therefore help them, guide them." – Girl, aged 15, Dominican Republic

"She can call the young generation and talk to them about leadership." – Young woman, aged 21-24, South Sudan

(vii) Crime and violence: addressing societal barriers and inhibitors was a key aspect of good leadership: addressing crime and violence in community and society was mentioned mostly in the Dominican Republic. In this context, it was particularly in relation to drugs.

"She works with people in the community and dreams that crime will be eliminated in the future, all the problems with young people who are doing bad things, who are on the wrong path." – Young woman, aged 15-21, Dominican Republic

"She uses her hands to express affection towards people, to children, to elderly people and she also protects the community by telling young men to behave well, not to become criminals and not to harm people in the community." – Young woman, aged 15-18, Dominican Republic

Box 3: Further leadership characteristics associated with helping and developing the community

Other characteristics, mentioned less frequently, were also entwined with helping and developing the community. These included:

(a) **Being educated and knowledgeable**: whilst formal education and academic schooling was perceived as important – particularly in Japan – more commonly, education was perceived as important not for its own sake but for its benefit to the community.

A young female leader should be educated, she should have knowledge of her community, her rights and duties. She should be aware of legal aspects of such." Young woman, aged 18-20, India

Knowledge relevant to the community – particularly knowledge of community culture, politics, policy and legislation – was cited as being important more often than formal education.

"Young women leader should have a knowledge of people/community, village, caste, profiles of community, structure of workplace, government schemes, should know how to make strategy for the progress." Girl, aged 15-17, India

Similarly, education and knowledge gained from international travel and experience was viewed as most useful in relation to one's society back home. A young female leader should also share and impart that knowledge to her community.

"Have knowledge of the economic, social and political approach of the world." Young woman, aged 17-19, Senegal

"She has been in other countries and knows how people are leaders." Young woman, aged 18-20, South Sudan

(b) **Clarity of vision, ambition and positivity:** the girls and young women saw young female leaders as being ambitious on behalf their communities and showing determination and positivity in working towards a clear vision of the future of their communities.

"I think that the woman leader has to see the future in a different way as other people do, because that's why she is a leader, to guide and advise other people on what we have to do to make our dreams come true." Young woman, aged 18-22, Dominican Republic

"I think she has always thought big. She has never accepted things as they are and she has always aspired to achieve more and more. She was not complacent and I think that helped her." Young woman, aged 15-18, Dominican Republic

"Have the vision of a better world. Make good forecasts, plans for the future must be the light of change, always project and inspire hope." Young woman, aged 18-19,Senegal

(c) **Reason, judgment and problem-solving:** This included not just striving to resolve problems in the community but exercising sound judgement, critically analysing situations and information and being able to resolve conflict.

"…But it's difficult to satisfy everybody. Now I want to be a leader who can listen to and respect every opinion, and yet not give into others, and provide a new solution." Girl, aged 15-17, Japan

The study participants identified the critical elements of insight and problem-solving as being part of the make-up of a good leader: *"Young female leader can inform about policies to her community, she should talk about issues and problems related to her community with community people. She can take forward problem related to school, college and her community to higher authorities. She can make people aware of their rights."* Young woman, aged 21-24, India

5.3.2 Advancing gender equality and women's and girls' rights

In all five countries, participants thought that a young female leader should actively prioritise and promote gender equality and the issues that affect women and girls in their country and/or community. This involved providing and promoting opportunities for girls who have never received opportunities before, including education and financial empowerment, encouraging women to speak out, and creating a gender-friendly environment and spaces. Advancing gender equality was strongly connected to vision, again linking to more collaborative ideas about leadership.

Often, advancing gender equality was phrased in very general terms of ending all forms of gender-based discrimination and challenging gender norms: "*the society where everyone is respected as a human regardless of gender*" (South Sudan). More specifically, young women identified a number of areas where a young female leader should strive for change. These are discussed as barriers to leadership in section 5.5 under barriers to leadership.

5.3.3 Kindness, fairness, consideration and compassion

Interpersonal skills and qualities, including kindness, fairness, consideration, compassion and empathy, emerged as ideal characteristics of female leadership, far more than recognised leadership traits such power, status or other leadership skills such as management and organization. People skills and human decency were also mentioned far more frequently than success, personal ambition, determination, courage and bravery. It is unclear whether the girls and young women identified characteristics of leadership purposefully or because they themselves have been brought up to believe that these are the only characteristics of leadership that girls and young women can exhibit. That is not to say that characteristics such as determination and courage were not mentioned at all, but they were mentioned far less frequently.

"She is friendly and warm, that's why she helps everyone, mainly children and elderly people, she is always positive, she is also very calm, she has a good character and she doesn't fight with anyone and she empathises with others." – Young woman, aged 15-21, Dominican Republic

"She will keep an understanding, welcoming and loving behaviour. She will listen to others first and would support everyone." – Young woman, aged 18-20, India

5.3.4 Communication skills

Communication skills, specifically choosing and using the right words to influence, engage, inspire, persuade and motivate those around you, were frequently mentioned across all five countries. This also closely tied in with how a leader went about community and societal development and achieving social change.

"Her messages are reassuring words; that's why they motivate us, they help us, and she says that we have to try to succeed, that we have to get qualified so that the community progresses and develops." – Young woman, aged 15-21, Dominican Republic

"'Be yourself' and 'It's alright to show weakness'. These two are the most impactive comments I've got from a leader. They are quite memorable because they came from a female. It's not that I would always need to hear those from leaders, but I think it'd be nice to have a leader that would say something like that." – Young woman, aged 21-24, Japan

5.4 Motivation to become leaders

Unsurprisingly, our findings on the key motivations and enablers of leadership closely mirror our findings on the key characteristics of young female leadership discussed in the section above. Overwhelmingly, the most commonly perceived motivation for any young woman to become a leader, and the most common response to the question of 'what would you do if you were a leader?' was to affect change. Across all five countries, the most common types of change that girls and young women wanted to affect were:

Changing the status quo, particularly in regard to social change, including addressing the following issues:

- Education
- Poverty
- Child abuse, exploitation and labour

There were country variations: Education was by far the most popular response in Japan. Poverty was a common response in Japan, India and South Sudan. Japanese respondents spoke more of global and national poverty, whereas in India and South Sudan poverty was described in local contexts. Ending child abuse and exploitation was a common response in India. Often, participants thought change was motivated by personal stories and experience of hardship, discrimination and resilience.

A large part of changing the world and status quo was improving the lives of girls and young women. This further highlights the commitment that a young female leader is perceived to have to advancing gender equality. Specifically, a key perceived motivation for young women to become leaders was to change gender norms and practices. The following areas emerged:

- Addressing gender-based violence
- Ending forced and early marriage
- Build a community of women leaders

It is unclear whether the girls and young women identified their leadership motivations purposefully or because they themselves have been brought up to believe that these are the types of change that they can affect as girls and young women. That is not to say that changes to other domains such as finance and the economy were not identified but this occurred far less frequently than social change of the nature identified above.

5.5 Barriers to leadership

Whilst the qualitative data found some barriers and deterrents to leadership that girls and young women described as being non-gender or age specific, such as responsibility, confidence and criticism, by far the most prevalent and significant barriers to leadership were gender-based barriers. In this section of the report the findings on gender-specific barriers to female leadership, in both the survey and FGDs, are discussed.

5.5.1 Becoming a leader is harder for women

Girls and young women in the survey were asked a series of questions to measure their perceptions of sexism as it pertains to leadership. In general, respondents thought that women leaders are held to a different standard than male leaders. A majority (59.7%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that women in leadership have to work harder than men in leadership to be respected, while an overwhelming 94.0% believe that women in leadership are treated less well because of their gender – findings which cut across age, education, job and wealth level, and marital status.

Table 11: Responses to statement: women in leadership have to work harder than men in leadership to be respected

	Percentage	**(n)**
Strongly disagree	10.5%	1,060
Disagree	16.1%	1,618
Undecided	13.7%	1,383
Agree	39.2%	3,941
Strongly agree	20.5%	2,059

Table 12: Responses to statement: women in leadership are treated less well because of their gender

	Percentage	(n)
Never	6.0%	608
Rarely	16.2%	1,627
Sometimes	42.0%	4,221
Very often	30.3%	3,050
Always	5.5%	553

Perceptions of sexism faced by women in leadership vary considerably by region. Respondents from Europe and North America were more likely than those from other regions to agree that women in leadership are treated less well because of their gender, and that they experience harassment. Analysis by country income level correlates with this, as those from high income countries were also more likely to agree to these statements than those from middle- or low-income countries.

Table 13: Perception of women being treated less well because of their gender rarely, sometimes, very often or always / by region

Region	Percentage	(n)
West & Central Africa	85.3%	1,279
East & South Africa	90.5%	1,260
Asia	93.2%	1,978
Europe	98.5%	2,021
North America	98.4%	1,139
Latin America	96.7%	1,779

Table 14: Perception of women being treated less well because of their gender rarely, sometimes, very often or always / by country income

Country Income	Percentage	(n)
Low Income	87.8%	2,539
Medium Income	94.8%	3,246
High Income	98.0%	3,671

In the FGDs, girls and young women also articulated that becoming a leader is significantly harder for females because of a lack of opportunities and because any woman who does become a leader is likely

to face constant discrimination and criticism and a lack of support from those around her. This perception was itself a barrier and a deterrent.

"In Japan, there is still prejudice and men are more likely to become a leader and reach higher rank. Many say "the nail that sticks up gets hammered down". Everyone should be eligible to pursue higher rank, but if it's a girl who has a dream or ambition to become a leader, people start criticizing. It's true of any woman who is working to become a leader." – Girl, aged 15-17, Japan

"Our society is a male dominant society, so the girls don't get a chance to come forward and orthodox thinking prevents girls from coming forward for leadership." – Girl, aged 15-17, India

"Even in the work environment, she is not well received, because people think that a woman leader is interfering." – Young woman, aged 17-21, Dominican Republic

"Some time a female leader may not be liked by everyone [….] she may be ignored, laughed at and mocked. She may also hear negative talk about herself." – Young woman, aged 18-20, South Sudan

Levels of education play an important part in identifying discrimination in survey responses: young women who had completed any level of schooling were even more likely to believe that women are treated less well due to gender than girls who have not completed schooling – see Table 15.

Table 15: Perception of women being treated less well because of their gender according to level of education

Education	Percentage	(n)
None	85.7%	168
Primary	94.0%	1,072
Secondary	94.2%	4,665
Tertiary Education	94.1%	3,551

The role of education in relation to leadership also emerged from the FGDs where girls and young women noted that stopping education reduced the chances of being able to take up a leadership role in later life and that family are key in either enabling education or reinforcing gendered stereotypes in education.

"Even I am studying in the 2nd year of my degree. People of my community are against my education; they always told my father to stop sending me for education and plan my marriage soon. But my father supports me for my education. So, people always demotivate a young female leader and tell them to stay away from their children as they are afraid a young female leader can 'spoil' their child." – Young woman, aged 18-20, India

5.5.2 Harassment and violence

92.9% of the girls and young women believe that women in leadership experience harassment (phrased as "unwanted physical contact"). Taken together, these findings suggest that girls see leadership as a negative, hostile place for women. Though it may or may not represent the reality of the workplace, these perceptions can act as a strong deterrent to pursuing leadership positions.

Table 16: Responses to question: women in leadership receive unwanted physical contact

Response	Percentage	(n)
Never	7.1%	710

Rarely	19.4%	1,952
Sometimes	42.3%	4,258
Very often	26.1%	2,627
Always	5.1%	510

Table 17: Perception of women experiencing unwanted physical contact rarely, sometimes, very often or always / by region

Region	**Percentage**	**(n)**
West & Central Africa	86.4%	1,296
East & South Africa	92.0%	1,282
Asia	90.9%	1,929
Europe	98.6%	2,023
North America	99.0%	1,146
Latin America	91.2%	1,678

Table 18: Perception of women experiencing unwanted physical contact rarely, sometimes, very often or always / by income country

Country Income	**Percentage**	**(n)**
Low Income	89.1%	2,578
Medium Income	91.5%	3,132
High Income	97.3%	3,644

Girls and young women with tertiary (93.1%), secondary (93.0%), and primary school (94.0%) education are also significantly more likely to think women leaders face unwanted physical contact than girls with no schooling (83.2%).

Table 19: Perception of unwanted physical contact rarely, sometimes, very often or always according to level education

Education	**Percentage**	**(n)**
None	83.2%	1,63
Primary	94.0%	1,073
Secondary	93.0%	4,605
Tertiary	93.1%	3,513

In the FGDs girls and young women also described both gender-based violence against women and girls generally, and violence likely to befall a woman who becomes a leader. This was most commonly described by participants in South Sudan but also mentioned in India.

"Sometimes there are violence against ladies when they want to become leaders, they will see you nothing in front of them because of your gender." – Young woman, aged 18-20, South Sudan

"Many times female leader have to face problems in travelling alone for official purposes." – Young woman, aged 21-24, India

"People say atmosphere is not safe for girls to work, so they don't allow girls to go out for work. Society opposes girls to become leaders because if one girl has done something wrong then society thinks all girls are bad and so they should not be allowed to go out of their houses." – Young woman, aged 18-20, India

It is interesting to note from the above that girls and young women view leadership as a negative, hostile place. However, this is in contrast to the way they themselves interpret leadership and this could be a way for them to overcome these barriers.

5.5.3 Gender stereotypes as an inhibitor of female leadership

In contrast to the above where external forces are working against female leadership, during the FGDs some of the characteristics of leadership were spoken about with inherent gender bias demonstrated by the girls and young women themselves. During the body mapping exercise, facilitators asked participants to assign characteristics to a 'young female leader'. This did not include asking about male leaders or gender differences between leaders specifically. Despite this, some of the characteristics mentioned by the girls and young women alluded to gendered norms and expectations of women and girls. This was particularly the case in South Sudan, India and the Dominican Republic where characteristics included:

- Humility and modesty
- Soft-spoken and "silent most of the times in case of non-agreement:" a young female leader is "more of an observer" and is "obedient"
- Needs to be good at domestic chores and motherhood
- Has correct morals and advices other young women on morality
- Dresses appropriately (including to avoid unwanted attention).

Whilst the above characteristics were by no means the most commonly described characteristics of female leadership, they highlight how harmful gender roles and stereotypes can be ingrained in girls and young women themselves from a very early age, therefore shaping their ideas of what women and girls can and should be.

"I think she sees a bright future. Women tend to think about environment and Sustainable future because she is more likely to be conscious about environmental contamination, because women use detergent at home when they do the washing." – Young woman, aged 18-24, Japan

"Men spend more time on business and women spend more time at home. Sometimes men are more logical and women are more emotional and emotion is required in some areas and logic is required in other areas." – Young woman, aged 21-24, Japan

The above quote is one of several examples we found where young women themselves, despite wholeheartedly agreeing that women can and should be leaders, appeared to buy into very stereotypical ideas about gender roles and characteristics.

Some FGD participants believed that behaving in a more 'feminine' way could lead to positive results. There were instances where participants thought that women were more able to address suffering and discrimination, not because of innate qualities they possessed as women, but as a result of experiencing suffering and discrimination themselves which meant they could better relate to others and identify necessary change.

"… because men think differently compared to women, they are kind of tougher, women are more sensitive and that's why they can help people more." – Young woman, aged 15-18, Dominican Republic

"I don't mean to say that we should have the experience of being discriminated against, but if we had such experience even if by chance, such experience will make us act in a way not to treat people in the same way. At the same time, it will also make us think about the feeling and the reasons of people who discriminate against others." – Young woman, aged 18-24, Japan

5.5.4 Balancing leadership with family or home life

The findings in relation to this issue signal a dichotomy. While, encouragingly, girls and young women in the survey overwhelmingly rejected the notion that women in leadership cannot be leaders and good mothers (81.1% overall), nonetheless, in the FGDs they recognised societal bias and barriers against female leaders also being good mothers.

Table 20: Women in leadership cannot be good mothers according to region

Region	Percentage	(n)
West & Central Africa	6.9%	103
East & South Africa	6.6%	92
Asia	3.2%	68
Europe	3.7%	76
North America	2.0%	23
Latin America	4.7%	87

Table 21: Women in leadership cannot be good mothers according to country income

Country Income	Percentage	(n)
Low Income	6.7%	195
Medium Income	4.3%	147
High Income	2.9%	107

Table 22: Women in leadership cannot be good mothers according to age

Age	Percentage	(n)
15 – 20	4.5%	241
21 – 25	4.4%	208

Table 23: Women in leadership cannot be good mothers according to education

Education	Percentage	(n)
None	9.2%	18
Primary	4.6%	53
Secondary	3.9%	195
Tertiary	4.8%	183

Table 24: Women in leadership cannot be good mothers according to social standing

Social Standing	Percentage	(n)
Towards the Bottom	3.9%	68
In the Middle	3.9%	226
Towards the Top	6.3%	155

Table 25: Women in leadership cannot be good mothers according to marital status

Marital Status	Percentage	(n)
Not Married	8.3%	95
Married	4.0%	327

In the FGDs, girls and young women reported deeply ingrained ideas about gender roles in their communities and societies, often in terms of their role in the home and family:

"Not only will women have the same considerations as men because I find it unacceptable that women's place is only at home. Women should be educated and participating in the change of their country." - Young woman, aged 18-24, Senegal

"Even my boyfriend regards it natural for girls to take care of the house, although we study the same amount. Of course, I do not think everyone thinks that way, but I wish that we could do things equally. If I was a housewife, I would do the household chores, but I wonder why I would be the only one to have more burden even though I study as much as my boyfriend." – Young woman, aged 21-24, Japan

"Some women face challenges of becoming leaders because they have kids at home." – Girl, aged 15-17, South Sudan

In South Sudan and India, participants flagged that girls' and women's mobility is often restricted, and they were often confined to the home:

"*Women have more challenges because men do not want their women to go for work*." – Young woman, aged 21-24, South Sudan

Interestingly - and linked to the point about ingrained gender stereotypes in section 5.5.2 above - in the survey the girls and young women who are already married are less likely to think that women can be leaders and good mothers than those who are not married (70.1% and 82.2% respectively).

5.5.5 Early and forced child marriage

In the FGDs, in India and South Sudan, it emerged that lack of education and lack of support from family were closely connected to child, early and forced marriage and early pregnancy. The girls and young women talked about child, early and forced marriage as alternatives to leadership rather than being able to co-exist or be compatible with leadership opportunities. Likewise, in the Dominican Republic teenage pregnancy was frequently cited as the alternative to education. The girls and young women suggested that education was one route to leadership and thus, by implication pregnancy would negatively impact on leadership opportunities.

"Women are taken to the villages and involve in early marriage and don't continue with education."
- Young woman, aged 18-20, South Sudan

"A leader should prevent abuse against young people and women; forced and early marriage…"
- Young woman, aged 18-24, Senegal

"If you want to become a leader, your parents marry you off because they think there is no money in leadership." - Girl, aged 15-17, South Sudan

5.6 Enablers for leadership

Between the survey and FGDs a range of internal and external enabling factors emerged which girls and young women saw as contributing to leadership aspirations and actual experiences of leadership.

5.6.1 Young women have confidence to lead

Overall, the survey found that young women exhibit high rates of confidence in their ability to lead, with 62% reporting that they are "confident" or "very confident" in their leadership abilities. Only 4.7% reporting not being at all confident. This means that the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions across the globe is not due to a lack of confidence in leadership abilities. Other key findings mentioned above point to the deterrents to leadership. What is unclear is the relationship between confidence, ambition and deterrents and for this to be meaningful further research at national or community level is needed.

As with their aspiration to leadership positions, confidence in leadership abilities increases with education and social standing. Interestingly, whilst aspirations decline with age, confidence in ability to lead increases with age (see table 13). Young women aged 21-25 years old (36.0%) are more likely to say they have high confidence in their leadership abilities than girls who are 15-20 years old (29.5%).

Table 26: How confident are you in your ability to lead?

	Percentage	**(n)**
Not at all confident	4.7%	470
A little confident	17.9%	1,798
Neutral	15.5%	1,558
Somewhat confident	29.5%	2,967
Very confident	32.5%	3,271

Table 27: Girls and young women who are "very confident" in their ability to lead according to age

Age	Percentage	(n)
15 – 20	29.5%	1,589
21 – 25	36.0%	1,682

Girls and young women who have completed tertiary education (39.4%) are more confident in their leadership abilities than girls who completed secondary (29.7%), primary school (22.4%), or no schooling (28.6%). Likewise, girls and young women with who have self-identified as having higher educations, jobs and wealth (53.4%) are many times more confident in their leadership abilities than girls who are self-identified at the middle (27.5%) or lower (19.8%) points.

Table 28: Girls and young women who are "very confident" in their ability in lead according to education

Education	Percentage	(n)
None	28.6%	56
Primary	22.4%	256
Secondary	29.7%	1,472
Tertiary	39.4%	1,487

Table 29: Girls who are "very confident" in their ability to lead according to self-identified levels of education, jobs and wealth

Social Standing	Percentage	(n)
Towards the Bottom	19.8%	344
In the Middle	27.5%	1,610
Towards the Top	53.4%	1,316

In contrast to the findings on aspirations to leadership, young women who are married are more confident in their leadership abilities than young women who are not married (45.2% compared to 31.3%).

Table 30: Girls who are "very confident" in their ability to lead according to marital status

Marital Status	Percentage	(n)
Not Married	31.1%	2,571
Married	45.2%	587

There is significant variation by region, with girls and young women more likely to be very confident in East & South Africa (59.4%) and West & Central Africa (58.1%) than other regions. Young women from North America (20.7%) and Europe (11.1%) were the least likely to report high confidence in their leadership abilities. Similarly, girls and young women in low-income countries (51.9%) are far more likely to say they have high confidence in their leadership abilities than girls in middle-income (33.4%) and high-

income (14.7%) countries. This is an interesting finding. Why does confidence and aspiration decrease for those in the richest countries (when it increases for the richest within that country)? There is need for more investigation but the findings demonstrate how nuanced issues of leadership – both individual and contextual are – meaning generalisations in relation to this issue should be avoided.

Table 31: Girls who are "very confident" in their ability to lead according to region

Region	Percentage	(n)
West & Central Africa	58.1%	872
East & South Africa	59.4%	827
Asia	25.2%	534
Europe	11.1%	228
North America	20.7%	240
Latin America	31.0%	570

Table 32: Girls and young women who are "very confident" to lead by country income classification

Country Income	Percentage	(n)
Low Income	58.7%	1,699
Medium Income	31.9%	1,092
High Income	12.8%	480

5.6.2 Predictors and deterrents of confidence in leadership abilities

In previous sections the predictors and deterrents of aspirations were examined. In this section, analysis of the survey data highlights the factors that most increase and decrease girls' and young women's confidence in their ability to lead.

The factor that reduces girls' and young women's confidence in their leadership abilities:

- *Perceptions of Sexism*. The more a girl or young woman believes women leaders have to work harder for the same respect as men leaders, the lower her confidence in her leadership abilities.

The factors that increase girls' and young women's confidence in their leadership abilities:

- *Education*. Girls' and young women's confidence in their ability to lead improves as their educational level increases.
- *Self-defined levels of education, jobs and wealth*: Girls and young women who report higher levels of education, jobs and wealth have more confidence in their leadership abilities than girls and young women who report lower levels.
- *Marriage*: Girls and young women who are married have more confidence in their leadership abilities than girls who are not married.
- *Leadership Experience*: The more leadership experience a girl has, the more confidence she has in her leadership abilities.

- *Role Models*: Girls with women leaders as role models in their community and in media have higher confidence in their leadership abilities.

The survey findings related to marriage, for example, should be read with caution as understanding the local context is important to unpack the implications of the finding. Furthermore, in relation to the qualitative data, the FGDs did not directly ask girls and young women about their individual levels of confidence and therefore there is no qualitative data on confidence levels related to education, social or marital status.

5.6.3 Encouragement, support and influence

The vast majority (86.0%) of girls and young women in the study say they have been encouraged by family, friends, or teachers to take on a leadership role. This remains the same across age and marital status, but increases with education and increases with self-identified levels of education, jobs and wealth.

Table 33: Encouragement from friends, family and teachers according to region

Region	Percentage	(n)
West & Central Africa	81.5%	1223
East & South Africa	89.4%	1246
Asia	90.2%	1915
Europe	82.2%	1687
North America	88.9%	1028
Latin America	84.1%	1547

Table 34: Encouragement from friends, family and teachers according to income level

Country Income	Percentage	(n)
Low Income	85.3%	2469
Medium Income	88.8%	3040
High Income	83.7%	3137

Table 35: Encouragement from friends, family and teachers according to age

Age	Percentage	(n)
15 – 20	85.3%	4595
21 – 25	86.6%	4051

Table 36: Encouragement from friends, family and teachers according to level of education

Education	Percentage	(n)
None	69.6%	137
Primary	79.6%	908
Secondary	84.9%	4203
Tertiary	90.0%	3398

Table 37: Encouragement from friends, family and teachers according to self-defined levels of education, jobs and wealth.

Social Standing	Percentage	(n)
Towards the Bottom	77.2%	1339
In the Middle	86.7%	5078
Towards the Top	90.3%	2226

Table 38: Encouragement from friends, family and teachers according to marital status

Marital Standing	Percentage	(n)
Not Married	84.4%	965
Married	86.0%	7106

Young women with a tertiary education (90.0%) are far more likely to have received leadership encouragement than girls who completed secondary (84.9%), primary school (79.6%), or no schooling (69.9%). A similar pattern is found with self-identified levels of education, jobs and wealth. Girls and young women who identified as having higher levels (90.3%) receive more encouragement for their leadership than girls and young women who reported having middle (86.7%) or lower (77.2%) levels.

The FGDs also asked girls and young women about the people who had the most influence over their lives: the people who made decisions for them and the people who helped them make their own decisions. By a large margin, parents were, unsurprisingly, the ones who were most commonly cited by girls and young women as making decisions for their daughters, followed by siblings and young women themselves. In terms of people who help young women make decisions for themselves, parents were also the most common answer, followed by friends and peers, siblings and teachers. Overall, when girls and young women mentioned a specific parent, it appeared that they were more influenced by mothers than fathers.

In addition, family support was highlighted as critical to girls' and young women's potential to become leaders, as outlined in section 5.7 family support has the potential to exacerbate or counter negative stereotypes which might hold girls and young women back.

5.6.4 Role models

Participants in the FGDs were also asked about the people who inspire them – their role models. Again, parents were the most common response, followed by teachers and mentors, siblings and other family, peers and media celebrities. Two-thirds of girls in the survey (69.4%) say they have women leaders in their community whom they admire. An even larger majority (82.9%) say they have media role models of women's leadership whom they admire. The most popular types of media celebrities were singers, musicians and TV personalities. After media celebrities, other named role models in order of popularity included authors and journalists, politicians and governors, activists and health care workers.

The named role models were more often female than male: girls and young women often named their mothers, grandmothers, sisters and female teachers. They also named inspirational women leaders from international to national level: from author and former first lady Michelle Obama to Kiran Bedi, a female retired Indian Police Service officer, social activist and politician; from Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai to Mariama Ba, a Senegalese author and feminist; from actor and campaigner Emma Watson to Nunu Kumba, a South Sudanese female politician.

When detail was given about how such female role models inspired them, girls and young women listed motivational characteristics such as courage, determination and fighting spirit in difficult circumstances. Notably, girls and young women also articulated how some of their role models encouraged them to believe and be confident in their own abilities, their rights to education and their potential to succeed in their goals. These findings are consistent with existing evidence on female role models as enablers for girls and young women's leadership aspirations.[63]

"In life one needs a person to give us an example and to tell us "you can do it, you can do it", someone to encourage us." – Girl, aged 15, Dominican Republic

"My role model is my mother […] I feel I'm nothing without her support. I want to bring positive changes in my society by getting inspiration from my mother as she is also a social worker." – Young woman, aged 21-24, India

"I get a lot of influence from her by listening to her experiences. She's slightly older than me and she has achieved a similar goal to mine. I'm inspired by her." – Girl, aged 15-17, Japan

"… when we take example of the [former] President of Liberia and the Secretary of USA, it means girls can also lead." – Young woman, aged 21-14, South Sudan

Respondents to the survey were asked whether there are women leaders in their community who they admire, and again this varied by age and education level. Young women aged 21-25 years old are more likely to have role models in their community than those aged 15-20 (72.8% compared to 66.4%), as are those with higher levels of education and those who self-identified as having high levels of education, jobs and wealth. Married young women are more likely to report having a woman in the community that they admire than those who are not married (78.6% compared to 68.4%). Those from North American and European countries were least likely to report having a female leader in their community, as were respondents from high income countries.

Table 39: Women in community who are role models according to region

Region	Percentage	(n)
West & Central Africa	73.9%	1109
East & South Africa	83.4%	1162
Asia	75.9%	1611
Europe	55.1%	1131

North America	63.5%	729
Latin America	67.2%	1236

Table 40: Women in community who are role models according to country income level

Country Income	Percentage	(n)
Low Income	78.5%	2271
Medium Income	76.9%	2632
High Income	55.5%	2075

Table 41: Women in community who are role models according to age

Age	Percentage	(n)
15 – 20	66.4%	3574
21 – 25	72.8%	3404

Table 42: Women in community who are role models according to levels of education

Education	Percentage	(n)
None	64.8%	127
Primary	58.2%	664
Secondary	67.4%	3332
Tertiary	75.6%	2855

Table 43: Women in community who are role models according to self-defined levels of education, jobs and wealth

Social Standing	Percentage	(n)
Towards the Bottom	59.1%	1023
In the Middle	69.0%	4040
Towards the Top	77.7%	1914

Table 44: Women in community who are role models according to marital status

Marital Status	Percentage	(n)

Not Married	79.5%	909
Married	68.4%	5651

Respondents were also asked whether there were women leaders they admire in the media, and were more likely to do so if they had higher levels of education and self-identified as having higher levels of education, jobs and wealth.

Table 45: Women in media who are role models according to region

Region	**Percentage**	**(n)**
West & Central Africa	89.9%	1349
East & South Africa	87.4%	1218
Asia	82.2%	1744
Europe	76.0%	1560
North America	76.0%	871
Latin America	86.7%	1596

Table 46: Women in media who are role models according to country income level

Country Income	**Percentage**	**(n)**
Low Income	88.7%	2567
Medium Income	88.9%	3043
High Income	73.0%	2728

Table 47: Women in media who are role models according to age

Age	**Percentage**	**(n)**
15 – 20	80.9%	4349
21 – 25	85.3%	3989

Table 48: Women in media who are role models according to education

Education	**Percentage**	**(n)**
None	68.4%	134
Primary	74.6%	851

Secondary	82.4%	4074
Tertiary	86.9%	3279

Table 49: Women in media who are role models according to self-identified levels of education, jobs and wealth.

Social Standing	**Percentage**	**(n)**
Towards the Bottom	76.9%	1331
In the Middle	82.3%	4818
Towards the Top	88.8%	2188

Table 50: Women in media who are role models according to marital status

Marital Status	**Percentage**	**(n)**
Not Married	83.0%	6853
Married	86.6%	1124

Interestingly, in response to the question in the survey, girls and young women were split regarding their beliefs about media representation of female leaders. 35.3% said the media does not treat female leaders fairly, 48.7% said the media does treat female leaders fairly and 16% were undecided.

5.7 The role of family

The role of family emerged as a critical finding in terms of both supporting and hindering girls and young women's leadership aspirations. Whilst all five countries reported that female leaders faced a general lack of support and criticism from society, a lack of support from family seemed to be more detrimental to leadership ambitions; conversely, support from family from a young age, including encouragement to defy gender stereotypes, was found to be was one of the key enablers of leadership.

"*Boys or males get more support from family."* – Girl, aged 15-17, India

"*People are more supportive towards boys or males. Even if boys have less knowledge or education in comparison of females, still community give more support to boys or males*." – Young woman, 18-20, India

"*I think that she became a leader because when she was a little girl her parents helped her, they advised her and gave her motivation to be strong and taught her that she had to know how to get on well with people, listen to them and help them*." – Girl, aged 15, Dominican Republic

These findings illustrate that families and communities are critical to harnessing leadership aspirations. Girls and young women are most influenced by their immediate environment and look to their family members as role models and supporters and to unburdened by gender norms. In this respect, more female family members were named than male family members although in many cases participants simply said 'parents' which makes the gender hard to unpick. Whilst family support alone will not be enough to overcome the structural barriers to girls' and women's leadership, achieving progress and equal representation without it is likely to be impossible.

5.8 Experience of leadership

Girls and young women were asked in the survey about their leadership experience with a question on whether they had ever been in a position where they led others or made decisions for others. The vast majority of survey respondents (85.1%) have had at least one experience of leading, with 25.6% reporting multiple leadership experiences.

Table 51: Leadership experience

	Percentage	**(n)**
No	14.9%	1,495
Yes, a little	59.5%	5,984
Yes, a lot	25.6%	2,578

Respondents' experience of leadership varies by age and education. Young women ages 21-25 are more likely to report a lot of leadership experience than girls aged 15-20.Girls and young women who have completed tertiary education (90.0%) are more likely to say they have had at least one experience of leading, compared to 67.9% of girls and young women who have not completed any schooling. Young women who self-identified as having higher levels of education, jobs and wealth have had more leadership experiences (88.9%) than those who self-identified as having middle (85.6%) and lower (78.2%) levels. Girls' leadership experience does not vary by whether they are married or not.

Table 52: Leadership experience according to age

A little leadership experience		
Age	**Percentage**	**(n)**
15 – 20	60.1%	3233
21 – 25	58.8%	2751
A lot of leadership experience		
Age	**Percentage**	**(n)**
15 – 20	23.5%	1262
21 – 25	28.1%	1316

Table 53: Leadership experience according to levels of education

A little leadership experience		
Education	**Percentage**	**(n)**
None	45.9%	90
Primary	60.5%	690
Secondary	60.1%	2975

Further Education	59.1%	2229
A lot of leadership experience		
Education	**Percentage**	**(n)**
None	21.9%	43
Primary	19.6%	224
Secondary	23.2%	1146
Further Education	30.9%	1165

Table 54: Leadership experience according to levels of self-identified education, jobs and wealth

A little leadership experience		
Social Standing	**Percentage**	**(n)**
Towards the Bottom	59.5%	1032
In the Middle	61.8%	3619
Towards the Top	53.9%	1328
A lot of leadership experience		
Social Standing	**Percentage**	**(n)**
Towards the Bottom	18.6%	323
In the Middle	23.8%	1394
Towards the Top	35.0%	861

Table 55: Leadership experience according to marital status

A little leadership experience		
Marital Status	**Percentage**	**(n)**
Not Married	60.2%	4975
Married	54.7%	711
A lot of leadership experience		
Marital Status	**Percentage**	**(n)**
Not Married	25.1%	2071
Married	29.1%	378

The one-in-four (25.6%) girls who report multiple leadership experiences are twice as likely as girls with no leadership experience to report high confidence in their leadership abilities (54.3% compared to 23.6%). It is unclear whether girls seek out multiple leadership experiences because they are confident in their abilities, or whether they are confident in their abilities as a result of multiple leadership experiences. Either way, this finding demonstrates the importance of exposing girls and young women to opportunities to lead early on in life.

Interestingly, respondents with multiple experiences are more likely to identify discrimination than those without leadership experience: they are more likely to think that women in leadership positions have to work harder than men to be respected (64.5% compared to 54.0% of girls with no leadership experience), that women leaders are treated less well because of their gender (94.1% compared to 87.7%) and that women in leadership roles experience unwanted physical contact, than girls with no leadership experience (93.2% compared to 86.5%). These findings indicate perceptions of sexism around leadership are not just perceptions: girls and young women *experience* leadership as a sexist, potentially hostile space for women. Furthermore, these findings present a Catch 22 situation, since both the survey and the qualitative data found that experience was one of the greatest enablers and predictors of leadership ambitions and confidence in leadership abilities. This suggests that girls and young women need to be provided with safe opportunities to craft leadership experience and skills early on.

Table 56: Agree and strongly agree that women in leadership are less respected according to leadership experience

	Percentage	**(n)**
No Leadership Experience	54.0%	808
Some Leadership Experience	58.9%	3526
A Lot of Leadership Experience	64.5%	1663

Table 57: Agree and strongly agree that women in leadership are treated differently according to leadership experience

	Percentage	**(n)**
No Leadership Experience	87.7%	1311
Some Leadership Experience	95.5%	5712
A Lot of Leadership Experience	94.1%	2427

Table 58: Women in leadership experience unwanted physical contact rarely through to always according to leadership experience

	Percentage	**(n)**
No Leadership Experience	86.5%	1293

Some Leadership Experience	94.5%	5653
A Lot of Leadership Experience	93.2%	2402

6. CONCLUSIONS AND CALLS TO ACTION

6.1 Conclusions

This research seeks to amplify the voices and views of girls and young women across the world. In doing so, it shines a light on a new and unique perspective of female leadership.

6.1.1 Girls' and young women's leadership aspirations

Girls and young women do aspire to lead. From adolescence and into early adulthood, they are motivated to become change makers and they want to work towards improving their community and country. Whilst there are variations by domain of leadership and across regional and income groupings and individual characteristics, overall girls and young women aspire to lead and have the confidence to do so.

6.1.2 Barriers to pursuing leadership ambitions

Despite their leadership aspirations, girls and young women are acutely aware of the difficulties that they would face if they chose to act on or pursue their aspirations. They spoke about the significant barriers that female leaders face: gender norms, gender-based discrimination, blatant sexism, harassment and violence, a lack of respect, and the expectation of balancing work and home life. Broadly speaking, these barriers were prevalent across countries and regions. Given such perceptions and the reality facing female leaders, it is unsurprising that girls' and young women's leadership aspirations wane as they get older.

Faced with pervasive patriarchal structures, institutional processes and gender roles and norms, girls and young women lack the opportunities and spaces to lead. They also lack the support to step into these spaces where they exist. In addition, the findings suggest that girls and young women are internalising harmful gender norms and stereotypes from a young age, which shapes and limits their ideas of female leadership. This is demonstrated by several findings illustrating that young women, even when they wholeheartedly agreed that women can and should be leaders, appear to buy into the very stereotypical ideas about gender roles and characteristics which they are seeking to change.

6.1.3 Pathways to pursuing leadership aspirations

Evidence from this research shows that age is critical: younger adolescent girls appear to be more optimistic and confident in their capability to lead than their older counterparts. Education is also an important factor in enhancing girls' and young women's leadership ambitions and potential – there are numerous findings across both the quantitative and qualitative data which show that education really does matter.

Families and communities also play a significant role. They are critical in unburdening girls and young women from restrictive gender norms and empowering them to act on their aspirations. Girls and young

women are most influenced by their immediate environment and look to their family members, and often the women and girls in their families, as role models and supporters of their goals and dreams. Unfortunately, there is also the family where girls experience restrictive norms and behaviours, closing down spaces for them to lead or aspire to lead. This dual role that the family plays must be recognised and appropriate action taken either to support or counteract its influence depending on the circumstances. Female leaders, from community, national to international levels, also inspire girls and young women, showing them that it is possible to overcome barriers and obstacles and lead change. Interestingly girls called out their friends and peers as those they could turn to for assistance and support. Taken together this all points to girls and young women portraying their leadership as collaborative and collective. They reach out when they need to and seemingly do not see becoming a leader as a purely individual journey.

6.1.4 New definitions of leadership

Following on from the above, this research has shown that girls and young women are defining leadership for themselves. And evidence from this research suggests they are defining leadership in collaborative terms. Girls and young women want to be change makers. According to the girls and young women who participated in this study amongst the most important characteristics of leadership were: driving change in their community, striving for social justice and gender equality, listening to others, making decisions collectively and leading in a compassionate way that empowers others.

6.1.5 Findings for further investigation

Across the board, young women from low-income countries are more likely to aspire to be a leader in their country, community or family than those from middle- or high-income countries.

Overall, girls emphasise leadership for the collective good. These findings support alternative forms of leadership: decision making in pursuit of social, political, economic and cultural equality not authority exercised to entrench individual power. However, this is at odds with current notions of leadership where individual power engulfed in hierarchical structures is considered the norm. If we are to encourage more girls to pursue leadership aspirations, how decisions are currently made needs to be reconciled with how girls want to lead.

Young women who are married reported feeling more confident in their leadership abilities than those who were unmarried. However, their aspirations to lead were limited to certain roles including their country and family. They were far less likely to see themselves as leaders in their careers. Whilst this suggests that the expectation of domestic responsibility placed on them outweighs their ambition for careers, it doesn't explain why they still aspire to lead in other ways.

6.2 Recommendations

These recommendations, based on the findings from this report, are built on the experiences and priorities of girls and young women and are focused on four key areas that they have identified. From an early age, girls and young women internalise gendered stereotypes which both shape and limit their ideas, ambitions and self-confidence. At the heart of any of these recommendations is the urgent need to challenge and transform social and gender norms that hold girls back from acting on their leadership aspirations.

These are the four calls to action.

- **Cultivate young leaders starting at home:** work in partnership with families, local leaders and communities to create a strong support network that nurtures girls' leadership aspirations instead of re-enforcing gender stereotypes that both shape and limit their ideas, ambitions and self-confidence.
- **Encourage new visions of leadership:** challenge the very perception of what it means to be a leader and re-enforce the message that girls and women belong in the places and spaces of power.
- **Challenge sexism and discrimination:** urgently tackle the pervasive discriminatory culture that deters girls from pursuing their leadership ambitions.

- **Set girls up to succeed:** direct efforts towards education and opening up further opportunities to empower girls to exercise their leadership skills and gain the necessary experience to be successful in serving their communities and driving change.

6.3 Cultivate young leaders, starting at home

Girls have said they are most influenced by their immediate environments and we know that age is critical when it comes to nurturing their leadership ambitions. Investments are most likely to be effective during adolescence and any efforts to support women's leadership must begin in childhood and increase and adapt as girls become young adults. Therefore, governments, corporates, the media, and civil society organisations must work in partnership with families and local communities to challenge and transform the cultural and gendered expectations that dictate the value and roles of girls and boys within the family and wider society.

1. Parents, schools, religious and cultural organisations **should be seen as key entry points to creating a strong support network** that nurtures girls' leadership aspirations. Efforts should be focused on making families more aware of their unique ability to foster equality in society by enabling girls to become leaders.
2. Civil society and non-governmental organisations should work with families and local communities to provide encouragement, opportunities and spaces equally to girls and boys. **Participation in decision-making processes** at family and community level can not only help girls to gain necessary skills but will also help challenge the social and gender norms that often dictate that political and civic leadership is reserved for men.
3. Mothers, fathers and brothers can all act as champions within the home and the local community. Fathers and brothers can **share the burden of domestic responsibility** as it relates to house-work and childcare in order to undermine the accepted stereotypes and **promote girls and young women's leadership.**
4. Within family, community and country environments, there is a need to **create safe spaces** where girls and young women can discuss issues that matter to them. Community and country leaders should work with girls and young women to create and co-design safe avenues for their civic and political participation.

6.4 Encourage new visions of leadership

Girls will only be encouraged in their ambitions when the concept of leadership itself is transformed to embrace a more collaborative, less authoritarian style and structure which girls feel they can work with. Critically, there is a need for those in positions of authority to **start an authentic discussion around alternative forms of leadership** to create greater awareness and understanding of how girls and young women are interpreting leadership styles and agendas. They should work with girls and women to assess what actions can be taken within existing structures and organisations to better reflect and operate within this more collaborative style. Governments, the private sector and the media should be seen to be visibly promoting a more inclusive and diverse society, not least within their own organisations, including sending out a clear message through public campaigns that girls and women belong in the spaces and places of decision-making and power.

1. For girls and young women, the presence of female role models is crucial to nurturing their leadership ambitions. Government departments, corporations and civil society organisations **must support mentorship schemes** and other ways to connect women who hold leadership positions to younger generations to provide a **critical intergenerational exchange.** This will help girls navigate challenges and provide a crucial source of encouragement as they pursue their ambitions to become leaders and to affect change.
2. Additionally, media organisations in particular must recognise their role in perpetrating stereotypes around women leaders. **Diversity, positive images and affirmative language** could transform the way women are portrayed, providing girls and young women with the encouragement they need, promoting gender equality rather than adding to the discrimination and hostility that girls currently experience.
3. Outside of this, key changes to public policy and legislation are required to ensure more women can enter into and stay in leadership and decision-making spaces and become the role models

that girls need. **Governments, national parliaments, political parties and corporations need to recognise and address patriarchy and gender bias** at the outset of formal processes, and seek to create terms of engagement that are enabling for young women: through actions that could include quotas, debating rules about respect and active listening, allowing young women to speak first, and supporting women-only dialogue forums in advance of formal processes so that they can strengthen their agency and voice.

6.5 Challenge sexism and discrimination

Any campaigns to encourage more women into positions where they can drive change must go hand in hand with efforts to tackle the sexism and discrimination, including violence and the threat of violence, often directed towards women leaders within different power structures and organisations. It is completely unacceptable: girls and young women see the price that many women leaders pay as they take up prominent positions, and this has a negative effect on their own aspirations to lead.

1. Governments and other workplaces must take concrete steps to prevent and respond to the very real and/or perceived experiences of sexual harassment and violence, that women leaders of all ages are subjected to, by enforcing existing laws and policies and strengthening reporting mechanisms. **Public campaigning** against all forms of violence against women must be funded and promoted.
2. It is everyone's responsibility to **condemn harassment** and violence against girls and women, including those who choose to speak up. Men and boys need to recognise that sexist behaviour will not be tolerated and instead be engaged, through public campaigning, as allies and champions in promoting gender equality and women's leadership.

6.6 Set girls up to succeed

Girls and young women value education and understand that higher education increases their opportunities across the board: it enhances both their confidence in their abilities and their chances of becoming leaders. The quality of the education they receive also matters and education should be gender transformative, leading not only to certificates and degrees, but to skills and knowledge that range from information about sexual and reproductive health and rights to the ability for critical thinking and practical action.

During the research it also became evident that experience was the largest enabler of girls' leadership aspirations. Girls and young women need safe spaces and opportunities to craft leadership experience and skills early on in childhood and adolescence if they are going to be able to pursue their ambitions in their careers, in the community and country. Participation in school governance is a critical first step towards developing agency and leadership skills and supporting girls and young women to join social networks and engage in civic action will also help them gain leadership experience. These spaces should provide opportunities for girls to exercise a different style of leadership, one which is more collaborative than the hierarchical and traditional leadership structures they see around them.

1. Governments, international organisations, school governing bodies and other key stakeholders must increase girls' access to schools and to wider educational opportunities which will empower them to take up leadership opportunities and to **make informed decisions** about their lives and futures. They need to equip girls with the tools, resources and support to challenge the status quo and demand an inclusive and equitable world that reflects their needs, rights and aspirations.
2. Education Ministries must **remove any gender bias and discrimination** within and across education systems, ensuring that learning materials are non-discriminatory, gender sensitive, inclusive and do not reinforce gender stereotyping around leadership roles and styles. Governments should undertake a gender review of their curricula, textbooks and games, accompanied by teacher training and supervision to ensure learning environments are free from gender stereotypes and instead promote equality, non-discrimination and human rights.

3. Governments and civil society must **support and encourage girls' and young women's groups, networks and youth-led civic action,** recognising that youth-driven collective action is one of the main avenues for adolescent girls to act on their aspirations to drive social change.
4. Opportunities for girl and young women leaders should be tied to additional support mechanisms including safe spaces, networking and mentor programmes all of which have been identified by girls and young women as important to **support their collective action and their leadership ambitions.** These should be flexibly funded and include access to decision makers, as well as increased support to girls and young women in managing safety and self-care.

"Young women leaders should see a women-friendly future, because they can be one of those women" Girl, 15-17, Japan

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ANNEX 1: DETAILED METHODOLOGY

Overview

This research sought to capture the voice and perspective of girls and young women and their own understanding of leadership and the potential pathways and barriers to becoming leaders themselves. However, it was also important to have a global overview of these issues, allowing comparability between different types of countries and contexts. Countries were selected at random from within regional and income categories. Plan International has offices in all participating countries. A mixed methods approach was applied: a short, quantitative survey in 19 countries and in-depth, participatory focus group discussions (FGDs) in a sub-set of five of those countries (see Box 1). Girls and young women aged 15-24 were the target in both approaches, capturing perspectives across the breadth of different contexts whilst enabling discussions on the complex and nuanced aspects of the research questions. However, for reasons which are undetermined, the survey data included responses from 317 25-year-olds. The research includes all the survey responses in the analysis.

Country selection and sample

Plan International operates in 70 countries, and divides its regions as follows:

- Asia
- East and Southern Africa
- Americas (Latin and South America)
- West and Central Africa
- High income countries

Representation of each of these regions was essential to the design of this research, recognising the huge differences likely to occur in different parts of the world. Therefore, a minimum of 15 countries was required for the survey sample: three countries in each of the five regions. Selection was limited by a) countries in which Plan International operates, and b) countries in which third party survey firms could carry out the survey. This resulted in 45 possible countries, which were then categorised by region, subregion and income group, and a random selection applied to each category.

Budget and national interest enabled an additional four countries to be included, totalling 19 countries FGDs were carried out in five countries, a subset of the countries that had taken part in the survey, in total one country per Plan region representing a range of characteristics: language, country income level, urban and rural areas and individual backgrounds.

Participant selection

Box 4. Countries in which the research took place

Survey: Benin, Canada, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Finland, Honduras, India, Japan, Netherlands, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sweden, Vietnam, Uganda, USA, Zimbabwe.

Focus group discussions: Dominican Republic, India, Japan, Senegal, South Sudan

The survey was conducted in all 19 countries, with a target of reaching 500 young women (aged 15-25) in each. Response rates for each country are displayed in Table 2. Potential respondents received an initial message which explained their selection for the survey and asked them to decide whether to opt in.

The overall sample size is 10,064 across the nineteen countries, and the sample size within each country is large enough to draw region-specific and country-specific conclusions. The average age of survey respondents was 22, with 53.5% of the sample ages 15 to 20 and 46.5% of the sample ages 21 to 25. Half of the respondents (49.2%) have completed secondary, and one-third (37.5%) have completed tertiary education. A small portion (13.6%) of girls and young women in the sample are married. Most of

the respondents in the sample say they have 'middle' self-defined levels of education, jobs and wealth (58.3%), while 17.2% describe their levels as "towards the bottom" and 24.5% say they are "towards the top."

12 FGDs were carried out in each of the five selected countries with commonly between 6-10 participants aged 15-25 in each, 400 in total across all five countries. Participants were identified by Plan country staff and networks; some participants were already involved in Plan's programmes and some participants were recruited through schools and higher education institutes with whom Plan has existing relationships.

Table 59: Response Summary by Country

Country *(languages of research)*	Data collected by (survey firm)	Sample size: Survey	FGD activities and (total participants)
Benin *(French, Fon)*	Kantar	500	0
Senegal *(French, Wolof)*	Kantar	500	12 FGDs (75 participants)
Sierra Leone *(Krio)*	Kantar	500	0
South Sudan *(Juba Arabic)*	Kantar	393	12 FGDs (90 participants)
Uganda *(English, Swahili, Luganda)*	Kantar	500	0
Zimbabwe *(Shona, Ndebele)*	Kantar	500	0
USA *(English)*	IPSOS	647	0
Canada *(English, French)*	IPSOS	510	0
Denmark *(Danish)*	IPSOS	505	0
Dominican Republic *(Spanish)*	IPSOS	627	13 FGDs (80 participants)
Honduras *(Spanish)*	IPSOS	564	0
India *(Hindi, English)*	IPSOS	534	12 FGDs (94 participants)
Japan *(Japanese)*	IPSOS	538	12 FGDs (74 participants)
Netherlands *(Dutch)*	IPSOS	519	0
Peru *(Spanish)*	IPSOS	649	0
Philippines *(Tagalog)*	IPSOS	517	0
Vietnam *(Vietnamese)*	IPSOS	533	0
Sweden *(Swedish)*	IPSOS	512	0
Finland *(Finnish)*	IPSOS	516	0
TOTAL		1-,064	

Survey

Modality

There were two survey firms used to ensure global coverage: Kantar covered the African continent and Ipsos Mori covered the rest of the world. Given the breadth of this study and the varied contexts, the survey was delivered through online and SMS modalities using survey firms operating in each country. These options allowed a cost-effective method, enabling access across a variety of contexts with speed and flexibility of implementation. Young women face many time pressures but SMS allowed the target audience to complete the survey at their own convenience. Respondents were also able to receive the survey invitation if their phone was switched off or was out of service, and they could participate without requiring internet connection. This was essential in contexts where connectivity is relatively low.

Furthermore, where the target audience is likely to be in education, unemployed and/or on a low income – it was essential that participating in the survey came at no cost to the respondent. Existing partnerships with Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) ensured that respondents would not be charged to receive the initial message, or to send their responses. Respondents were given a $0.50 incentive on completion of the survey. This was paid through a SIM 'top up', meaning that the respondent received the incentive amount in the form of phone credit upon completion of the survey. Only respondents that completed the entire survey were eligible for the incentive.

Questions were sent to respondents one message at a time to ensure clarity over which question they were responding to. On completion respondents were advised of when they would receive their incentive and where to find further information on the survey.

Tool

Using the research questions as a basis, survey questions were devised by the Geena Davis Institute, with reflection and input from Plan International staff at HQ and country office level. Alongside demographic questions including age, marital status, self-defined disability and level of education the survey included 10 questions on aspirations to lead, experience of leading, confidence, encouragement, role models and discrimination. One of the demographic questions was about the relative social class position respondents saw themselves in. Determining the social class of respondents typically takes several questions, some of which would be difficult for the target audience to respond to (e.g. household income) or may not be appropriate across the different contexts (i.e. what may be defined as a household in one context, may be different in another, therefore reducing comparability). As a result, a proxy question was used to measure respondents' social class as defined by self-identified levels of education, jobs and wealth.[3] This question carried a number of limitations since responses and reported findings to this question are solely based on perceptions, rather than an objective measure such as household income.

The survey asked young women about their aspirations by domains of career, country, community and family. Participants in the survey were not provided with a definition of leadership and definitions of leadership was too nuanced a topic to ask about in the survey questions.

The full survey is included in Annex 2.

Testing

Prior to the full launch of the survey, a testing phase was carried out with the aim to better predict the likely incidence rate of the target population, and the completion rate. Across countries on the African continent the incidence rate of young women using mobile phones during the testing phase was around 15% across each of the countries, however the completion rate in testing varied significantly.
Following low response rates to the SMS survey in some countries, two alternative methods were adopted as a means of boosting response rates:

- Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) – a web-based, interviewer administered method

[3] Question wording: Where would you place yourself on a ladder if the top is for those with the best jobs, education, money? Towards the bottom; In the middle; Towards the top

- Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) – a telephone based, interviewer administered method that is suitable for all mobile phone types and therefore is efficient in areas with low connectivity.

Consent & ethics

The relevant permissions to conduct SMS-based research within each of the countries was granted prior to launching the survey. Respondents were given the option to opt in to the survey on receipt of the first message and were able to opt out throughout completion of the survey. They were signposted to relevant information to confirm the legitimacy of the survey. This simple opt out was followed up by two consent questions. The first of these was used to confirm informed consent, and that respondents were not being coerced into participating.[4] The second question was targeted at respondents under the age of 18 and was used to confirm parental or guardian permission for participation in the survey.[5] Kantar Public and Ipsos Mori are members of the European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR), a membership organization representing the interests of the data, research and insights profession at an international level. The ESOMAR code stipulates standards of "ethical and professional conduct designed to maintain public confident in research" to which members must abide. The three fundamental principles are:

1. Researchers must be transparent with subjects about the purpose of the research;
2. Personal data about the respondents must be protected from unauthorized use;
3. Researchers must be ethical and do no harm to subjects and do no harm to the reputation of market research.

Analysis

The analysis framework was designed in order to unpack the key research questions as stated above. Recognising that in order for young women to become leaders, they need to aspire to and achieve their goals and in doing so they need to overcome the gender norms and structures which limit their vision of the possibilities awaiting them. The research therefore set out to understand whether they aspire to leadership and the common barriers, pathways and enabling factors. The quantitative data from the survey was analysed using SPSS and the qualitative data was analysed using NVivo. The combined analysis framework presented below represents the top-level coding themes, according to which this report is structured.

Table 60: Top level analysis framework

	Aspirations to leadership	Characteristics and qualities of leadership	Motivations to become leaders	Barriers to leadership	Enablers to leadership	Level of experience of leadership
Quant	X			X	X	X
Qual		X	X	X	X	X

Focus group discussions

Tools

The focus group discussion tool was developed by Plan International with inputs from the Geena Davis Institute. The development process included review and reflection from technical experts, country office

[4] Question wording: Reply 1 to confirm that you are choosing to take part in the survey, and that you are not being forced to take part.
[5] Question wording: If you are under 18 years old, please reply 1 to confirm that you have permission from a parent or guardian to take part

staff, and representatives from the Global Young Influencers. The tool was designed to be participatory and interesting for the young women taking part, to illicit more in-depth reflection and discussion. It was pinned around two key activities: body mapping and an activity that sort to gauge the main sources of influence and inspiration in the lives of young women. In the body mapping exercise, participants were asked to reflect what kind of characteristics and attributes a young female leader might have. The goal of this activity was to understand how young women define leadership and the qualities involved in it. The second activity, on influence and inspiration, required the participants to identify critical people in their lives – either known to them or popular figures from outside their immediate community – and rate the extent to which those people influenced or inspired the decisions and directions of their lives. This tool sought to identify role models and sources of encouragement for young women in selecting their life pathways. In addition, using these activities as a platform, there was a set of discussion questions to hone in on specific aspects of the research questions and encourage further reflections from the participants.

The FGDs were designed with the intent of understanding how young women themselves perceived leadership in their own contexts. The aim was not to restrict the topic of leadership to any one domain or definition. If participants stated that they needed a definition of leader or leadership, facilitators were instructed to respond that a leader is 'someone who leads a group of individuals.'

The research tool used in the FGDs are included in Annex 3. This tool was further adapted and refined in each country during training of researchers, drawing on their local knowledge and expertise to ensure contextual relevancy of the tools.

Local research teams – recruitment and training

In all countries, researchers were recruited to lead the process. Researchers were predominately female, although due to capacity constraints in Senegal, some notetakers were male. In Japan and the Dominican Republic, the researchers were experienced external researchers employed by Plan; in Senegal the researchers were post-graduate students; in India and South Sudan the researchers were Plan International field staff, staff from Plan's partner organisations and local community volunteers. All researchers were selected for their experience, skills, values and approach and vetted to ensure they did not hold a criminal record.

Researchers were provided with a three to four-day training led by Plan International staff, which included topics of gender and equality, child safeguarding (including local policies and procedures), ethics, facilitation skills and the tools. The training was practical and reflective. Tools were then piloted as a final check on relevance and appropriateness of the tool and to further hone the skills of the researchers.

Consent & ethics

Plan International has considerable experience working with and conducting research with children and young people and follows strict protocols on safeguarding and ethics. All processes in this research aligned to Plan International's *Framework for Ethical Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning.* In addition, an external ethics check was sought and approved for all research within the project.

Where required and possible, national and local approvals were sought. In Senegal and South Sudan appropriate national and local ethical approval and permissions were obtained prior to data collection starting. In South Sudan, ethical approval was obtained from the South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics; this approval was subsequently passed on to the state governor's office in Jubek and Torit for acknowledgement. Whilst there are local IRBs in India and Japan, it is not mandatory to apply or receive ethical approval prior to conducting data collection in these countries. Plan Dominican Republic has no access to any external ethics committee. As such, it was necessary to seek the external ethics check.

Participatory tools were designed to minimise risks to the participants and included no discussion of traumatic or harmful topics. Safe and unbiased selection and recruitment processes were followed. Researchers were trained on informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and safeguarding procedures. Informed consent was gathered for all participants prior to data collection starting, including appropriate consent from parents/guardians for those under 18 and unmarried where required. In addition, local gatekeepers and local authorities were consulted where appropriate and required in advance of data collection starting to ensure girls and young women's safe participation in research.

Analysis

Once translated into English, all transcripts were coded using NVivo. We focused on coding that fell within the main hierarchy codes of barriers, enablers and motivations to leadership, characteristics of leadership, and key sources of influence and inspiration in young women's lives. We used case classifications for age range of focus group, country and location within country, so it was possible disaggregate and compare and contrast findings according to these characteristics. See analysis section 8.3.5 for the top-level combined analysis framework.

Limitations

Survey

Due to the modality of the survey, it necessarily included only young women who were literate and had access the necessary technology. Though the use of SMS will have increased access to some extent, the methodology would not have allowed access to the most marginalized young women and therefore are not be generalisable across whole populations. In addition, without face to face survey administration it is not possible to verify that each respondent was definitely female, although respondents did not know in advance that the survey was for females only, and the technical report from one of the survey companies suggested a high level of 'screen-outs' where respondents discarded survey after being asked to confirm their gender. Following the low response rate to the SMS survey in some countries on the African continent, it is expected that the mode shift to the alternative methods (CAPI and CATI) in order to increase response rates will have had an impact on responses and characteristics of participants. For example, a shift towards an interviewer administered survey may mean respondents who are less technologically literate may be more likely to participate, but respondents who have busy schedules may be more difficult to access. Furthermore, a shift towards modes where an interviewer is present (either over the phone or in person) may mean there is an element of social desirability bias that influences responses. On the other hand, having an interviewer administer the survey may mean that the respondent is dedicating a higher level of attention to their responses, rather than completing while they are also doing something else. Although having multiples modes of data collection does bring some limitations, using these modes allowed for the target sample size to be reached ensuring that robust data analysis can be drawn from the data.

The modality of the survey meant that only 15 questions could be asked, 5 of which were demographic, and questions had to be short, concise and closed. As a result, it was not possible to include questions on nuances of leadership or follow-up on specific issues. However, the survey did allow us to capture young women's perspectives and interpretations on broad leadership issues.

FGDs

FGDs did include some of the most marginalized populations as participants were from Plan International programmes. However, recruitment methods varied by country and this may have affected the findings in each country. When reviewing findings, it is important to bear in mind that participants in some countries have had access to Plan International programming, which may have increased their awareness of issues around gender and equality.

Due to ethical considerations and challenges with accessing younger children, especially using this technology, the research was only conducted with 15-25-year-olds, and therefore does not tell us anything about girls in early adolescents, where many critical changes may be taking place.

Levels of experience and confidence in facilitation and notetaking skills varied considerably between the researchers employed as data collectors across all five countries and sometimes within countries. Whilst all FGDs were audio recorded, there was some variation in the quality of the transcriptions and the translations into English.

ANNEX 2: SURVEY

Item Number	Question	Character Count

Q1	Select all that apply: I would like to be a leader in: 1)My career or job 2)My country 3)My community 4)My family 5)Undecided/not sure 6)None of the above	155
Q2	How confident are you in your ability to lead? 1)Not at all confident 2)A little confident 3)Neutral 4)Somewhat confident 5)Very confident	142
Q3	Have your family, friends, or teachers ever encouraged you to take on a role where you have to lead or make decisions for others? 1)No 2)Somewhat/A little 3)Yes	160
Q4	Have you ever been in a position where you led others or made decisions for them? 1)No 2)Yes- a few times 3)Yes- a lot of times	128
Q5	Women in leadership have to work harder than men in leadership to be respected. Do you…? 1)Strongly disagree 2)Disagree 3)Undecided 4)Agree 5)Strongly agree	156
Q6	Female leaders are treated fairly by the media. Do you…? 1)Strongly disagree 2)Disagree 3)Undecided 4)Agree 5)Strongly agree	124

Q7	Women in leadership cannot be good mothers. Do you…? 1)Strongly disagree 2)Disagree 3)Undecided 4)Agree 5)Strongly agree	120
Q8	How often do you think women in leadership positions are treated less well because of their gender? 1)Never 2)Rarely 3)Sometimes 4)Very often 5)Always	153
Q9	How often do you think women in leadership roles experience unwanted physical contact? 1)Never 2)Rarely 3)Sometimes 4)Very often 5)Always	138
Q10	Are there women leaders in your community that you admire? Reply with 1 or 2. 1)Yes 2)No	88
Q11	Are there women leaders in media [film, television, videos] that you admire? Reply with 1 or 2. 1)Yes 2)No	106
Q12***	What is your ethnicity? 1)Hispanic or Latino 2)White 3)Black 4)Indigenous 5)Asian 6)Other This item to be asked ONLY in US and Canada.	200

Q13	Do you have any difficulties in daily living [e.g. seeing, hearing, moving, talking]? 1)Yes 2)No	97
Q14	What is the highest level of schooling you have completed? 1)None 2)Primary 3)Secondary 4)Further education/tertiary	117
Q15***	Are you married? 1) Yes 2) No 3) Divorced/ Widowed / Separated This item to be asked in replacement of ethnicity item (Q12) in all other contexts.	185
Q16	Where would you place yourself on a ladder if the top is for those with the best jobs, education, money? 1)Towards the bottom 2)In the middle 3)towards the top	159

ANNEX 3: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION TOOL

Please note that this is a master version of the tool which was adapted: separated for each of the five countries participating in the focus groups according to local context.

Setting up

Consent: participants should have been through a consent process in advance of the FGD. Those aged 17 or under must have consent of a parent or guardian. See consent process for details. Participants who have not been through the consent process cannot take part in this activity.

Participants: There should be 6-8 girls or young women in the room, of approximately the same age range:

- 15-17
- 18-20
- 21-25

Room set-up: The room or space should be private and quiet, away from other noise or others who might listen in. There should be places to sit in a circle, and room to move around.

Equipment: Flip chart paper & pens, a large outline of a body (A2), post-it notes.

Introduction – 10 mins

- Remind all participants of the following:
    - We will be discussing questions with them about girls and young women in leadership or positions of power, and the role of others in girls' lives.
    - Everything you say today will be used to improve how we work at Plan International.
    - Everything you say is completely anonymous. Things you say may be used in reports or publications, but we will never publish or share your name with anyone.
    - We ask that you keep what you hear today confidential too. However, please remember that there are others in the room, so only share what you are comfortable with.
    - You don't have to answer any of the questions if you don't want to, and you can choose to leave at any time. It's fine if you decide you don't want to take part anymore.
- Ask the participants if they have any questions about those points.
- Rules of the discussion – ask the young women to come up with rules for the meeting. Make sure they cover the following:
    - We want to hear as many opinions as possible – there are no right or wrong answers
    - Respect each other and listen to what others have to say, don't cut anyone off or dominate the discussion
    - Try not to have side conversations unless it's part of the activity
    - Keep what you hear in this room secret or confidential – it might harm others if you tell people what they have said
    - If you have to take a phone call please leave the space *(not relevant in all contexts)*.
- The meeting should take about two hours in total.

Activity 1: body mapping – 55 mins

1. Put a large outline of a body on the floor
2. Say to the group: - 15 mins

This is a young woman who is a leader in her community. I want you to tell me all about her.

- *Let's start with her head! What kind of knowledge does she have? Remember she's a leader – so what kind of things do you think she would need to know or understand to be a leader? How do such people think?*

[Ask the girls to write or draw some ideas on post-it notes or directly on to the paper near the head. They can do it on their own or discuss with the person next to them].

- *Okay – next, let's move to her hands. What kind of things does she do? What activities does she take part in?*

[repeat – ask girls to write notes down and put on the image near the hands]

- *Now, what about her heart? What kind of person is she? What kind of character does she have? How does she treat people around her?*

[add notes near heart]

- *Next, let's talk about her feet! Where has she been in her life and what has she done? What is she doing now? What kind of experience does she need, in order to become a leader? Where is she going in the future?*

[add notes near feet]

- *So now – on to the stomach! What are her goals and ambitions? What does she want to change? In what ways does she help her community?*

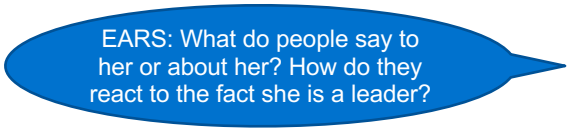
[add notes near stomach]

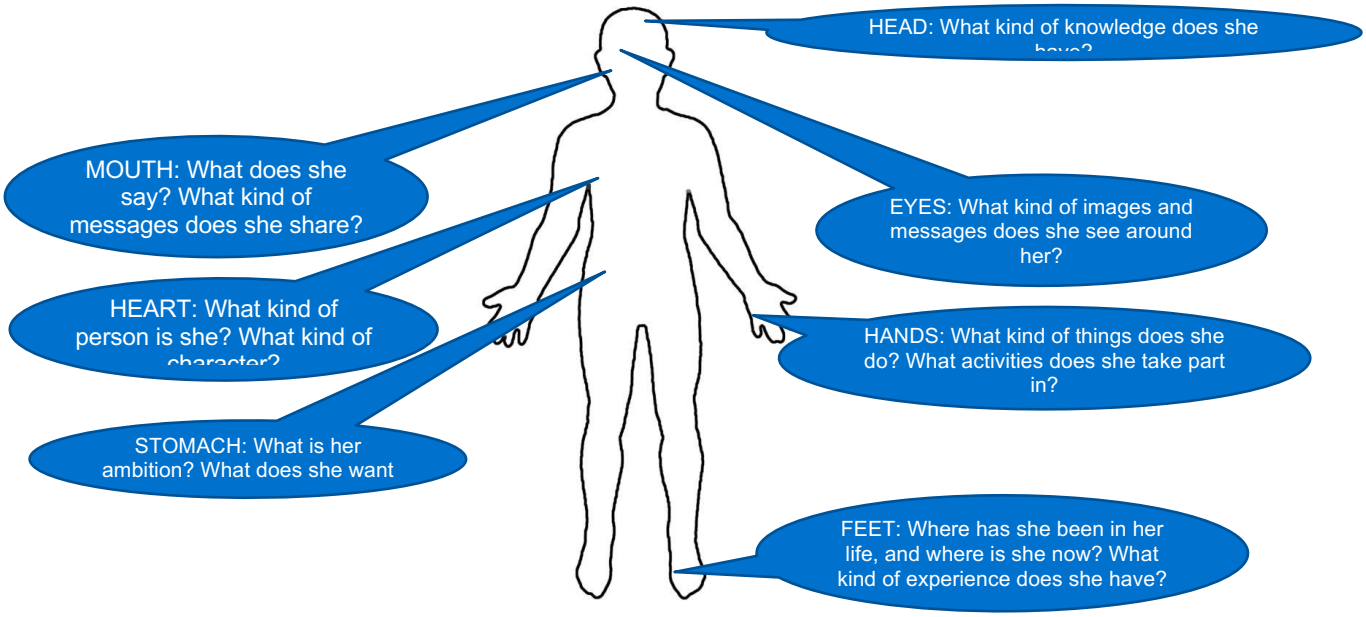
- *Mouth – What does she say? What kind of messages does she share?*
- *Ears – What do people say to her or about her? How do they react to the fact that she is a leader?*

[add notes near ears]

- *Eyes – What kind of images and messages does she see around her?*

Okay, now we have done a lot of the body! Let's discuss what you have written.





3. Go through each of the sections in turn and discuss what is written. Read the comments/ pictures aloud and ask the young women to explain more. If the young women are not sharing much, ask probing questions, such as: - 20 mins
    - *Why do you think that?*
    - *Can you explain more?*
    - *Is that specific to leaders, or is it true of all girls? Why/ why not?*

4. Once you've been through all the body parts, say to the young women: - 20 mins

We've learnt a lot about what a young female leader might be like, her skills, experience and character. Is there anything else you can tell me about her, apart from what we've already discussed?

- *Do you think she likes being a leader? Why/ why not?*
- *Do you think young women like you could become leaders, or are already leaders or drivers of change? Why / why not?*
- *What do we mean when we talk about a 'leader'? Is there a difference between someone who is a global leader and someone who is a leader in their community or family? What are those difference, and what are the similarities?*
- *Why do you think would people want to become leaders, and driver change or hold positions of power?*
- *What do you think are the challenges people face when they want to become a driver of change? Is it different for men and women?*
- *If you were a leader, what would you want to change? How would you act towards others around you, and what would you do?*

SHORT BREAK – 5 minutes

Activity 2 –influence or inspiration – 60 minutes

1. As a whole group, ask the young women to brainstorm people who affect their lives. *Who influences you or inspires you and your aspirations for the future? They could be people you know - in your family or household, at your school, in your community - or people you've never met, like politicians, movie stars or people on TV, they could be living next door or in America!*
   Ask the group to think and discuss in pairs (2 minutes). Then ask everyone to share their ideas and write them down on post-it notes/ pieces of paper. - 15 minutes

2. Next, show the respondents the three corners:
    - Corner 1: People who make decisions for you. *These are people who decide things about your life or your future. They might ask for your opinion, but they have the ultimate say.*
    - Corner 2: People who help you to make your own decisions. *These are people who discuss or input into decisions or plans, but let you make up your own mind.*
    - Corner 3: People who inspire you or act as a role model. *People that are inspirational or influential, or are role models to you; could be someone you know personally or famous or well-known people.*

    Together, go through the list of people they have brainstormed, and ask them to agree where that person goes. Each person can go under as many categories as relevant (so 'mother' might go under corner 1, 2 and 3, for example). They can add more people if they think of them.

    -15 minutes

3. Go to corner 2 (people who help you make your decisions). Ask the young women the following questions and discuss:
    - Who are the people in corner 2? What kind of roles do they have, in your life or in society more generally?
    - How do the people in corner 2 help you to make your own decisions? What do they do? What kind of guidance do they provide?

    -10 minutes

4. Go to corner 3. Ask the young women the following questions and discuss:
    - Who are the people in corner 3? What kind of roles do they have, in your life or in society more generally?
    - How do the people in corner 3 inspire you? What qualities do you find positive or useful about them?
    - Can you think of any examples of how this kind of person might change someone's aspirations or plans for the future?

    -10 minutes

Plenary Discussion – 30 minutes

Say to respondents: *We have discussed many useful things today! I just wanted to ask a couple of questions or reflections based on this:*

- *Do you think girls and young women can and should be leaders? Why/ why not?*
- *What do you mean by 'leader'? Is there a difference between someone who is a global leader and someone who is a leader in their community or family? What are those difference, and what are the similarities?*
- *If you were a leader, what would you want to change? How would you act towards others around you, and what would you do?*

Closing

Thank the participants. Remind them of how the responses will be used but that they will remain anonymous. Remind them not to share things that were discussed by others in the session.

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Partners

This report is based on research produced by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media and Plan International.

The mission of the **Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media** is to engage, educate, and influence media content creators, marketers, and audiences about the importance of eliminating gender bias and stereotypes in media. The Institute has amassed the largest body of research on gender prevalence in family entertainment, spanning more than 20 years. Research findings are in high demand by companies and organisations interested in the empowerment of women and girls. The Institute's research serves as the basis for education and outreach programmes that help families, studios, educators and content creators become critical consumers and producers.

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We strive for a just world, working together with children, young people, supporters and partners. Using our reach, experience and knowledge, Plan International drives changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels. We are independent of governments, religions and political parties. For over 80 years we have been building powerful partnerships for children and we are active in more than 75 countries.

Girls Get Equal

Plan International has been campaigning for girls' rights for over a decade and the current Girls Get Equal campaign aims to ensure girls and young women have power over their own lives and can help shape the world around them. Promoting young female leadership is central to the Girls Get Equal campaign. While this includes access to formal positions of power and authority, such as increasing the numbers of young women and girls in decision-making roles in public life, it also looks beyond this. The campaign seeks to redefine leadership to better reflect how girls, young women and young advocates and activists are choosing to lead: working with them to ensure that leadership is feminist, gender transformative and inclusive. It means not reinforcing a narrow male-defined set of leadership skills and behaviours or replicating the male-dominated power and leadership structures that currently exist. Throughout the campaign there will be ongoing research, partnering with girls and young women to fully understand what it means to them to be a leader.

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