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STORMING THE NORMS

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

Plan International Asia-Pacific Regional Hub
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CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

vi   **STORMING THE NORMS**
Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

LIST OF ACRONYMS

APAC	Asia-Pacific Regional Hub
CEFM	Child, Early and Forced Marriage
CEP	Community Empowerment Program
CSE	Comprehensive sexuality education
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EBI	Evidence-based intervention
ERIC	Ethical research involving children
FGD	Focus group discussion
FGM/C	Female genital mutilation/cutting
GTA	Gender-transformative approach
IGA	Income-generating activities
IPV	Intimate-partner violence
KII	Key informant interview
LDG	Listening and discussion group
MER	Monitoring, evaluation and research
NPSV	Non-partner sexual violence
RiH	ResultsinHealth
SAA	Social analysis and action
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SHIFT	Scoping, Highlighting, Identifying, Formulating and Transforming
SNAP	Social Norms Analysis Plot
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
TESFA	Towards Economic and Sexual Reproductive Health Outcomes for Adolescent Girls
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
WHO	World Health Organization

STORMING THE NORMS   vii
Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) is a global issue, a harmful practice and widely recognized as a violation of children's rights and the rights of girls and women. Over the past decade, the practice of CEFM has been declining, yet the global progress, particularly in Asia and the Pacific, is not on course to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3 of eliminating harmful practices such as CEFM by 2030.

Globally, approximately 650 million girls and women alive today were married before age 18—with South and South East Asia having the highest number of cases. One in three of the world's married girls, or nearly 16 million, live in India; and other Asian countries with high numbers of cases are Bangladesh with 2.5 million, and Pakistan and Indonesia with 1.2 million each.

CEFM has a more significant and adverse effect on girls than on boys. Deeply rooted social and gender norms regarding the roles and behaviours ascribed to girls contribute to CEFM, as well as negatively impacting girls' education, health and well-being, social engagement and empowerment, and it violates their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Thus, there is a need to increase the knowledge base and evidence around which, and how, social norms and gender norms perpetuate CEFM through the complex interaction between norms, attitudes and behaviours.

In line with Plan International's Gender Transformative Approach (GTA), Plan International's Asia-Pacific (APAC) Regional Hub embarked on this research to contribute to the global knowledge about social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM in the region. Different from personal attitudes, norms are "the informal rules governing behaviour" in a community or social group. Specifically, social norms are what individuals believe is 'typical' and 'appropriate' behaviour based on what they think others in their reference group (i.e., the group they identify themselves to be a part of) do and expect of them;

while gender norms are a sub-set of social norms defining the acceptable and appropriate roles and behaviours for women and men in society.

Based on an in-depth literature review and key informant interviews (KIIs), this research identifies negative social and gender norms causing and perpetuating CEFM and aggravating the situation of married girls in South and South East Asia. It also examines how social and gender norms are amplified in different structures and sectors, develops recommendations to counter these harmful norms using a GTA, and presents indicators and metrics for measuring social and gender norm change, as well as promising practices or approaches that have been measured to shift harmful norms. To the extent possible, the research also identifies examples of positive norms.

While findings of the current research reinforce the assertion that social and gender norms curtail adolescent girls' freedoms, access to resources and participation in decision-making, the study also addresses the need for more in-depth and targeted information on which specific social and gender norms perpetuate CEFM. The social and gender norms identified concerned:

- the centrality of marriage and family honour;
- women's domestic and subordinated role in the family and their primary function as wives and mothers;
- the restriction around girls' mobility;
- traditional beliefs regarding sexuality, SRHR, and femininity and masculinity;
- the notions of women's premarital virginity and purity being paramount to maintaining family honour;
- limitations on women's and girls' access to resources and to the benefits from those resources; and
- the expected obedience to elders, filial piety and age hierarchies that aggravate gender norms that hinder girls' voice and agency.

Additionally, gender norms ascribe lower value on girls in patriarchal societies, which in turn, limit married girls' agency, autonomy and access to opportunities, and place them at greater risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Recommendations to counter social and gender norms that perpetuate CEFM include the following strategic actions:

- invest in and implement girl's empowerment initiatives;
- engage young people as partners in youth-led activism;
- work with faith-based leaders to transform harmful social and gender norms;
- influence individual family and community awareness and attitudes around social and gender norms that impact girls' education;
- deliver gender-sensitive, context-specific, and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and SRHR information and services;
- engage men and boys as change agents; and
- use multipronged strategies to change harmful norms and attitudes, and to optimize gender equality laws and strengthen their implementation.

Additionally, the report presents concrete recommendations on next steps for Plan International staff (and other practitioners in the field of eliminating CEFM) to learn from the research and deliver social and gender norm change programming using a GTA. Following are the five key recommendations based on the findings obtained from the literature review, key informant interviews and the online workshops conducted during the research.

1. DESIGN PROGRAMMES FROM THE ONSET WITH SOCIAL AND GENDER NORM CHANGE GOALS

The focus on social and gender norm change means going beyond public awareness raising and traditional behaviour change interventions focused on changing individual attitudes. This is because changing individual attitudes may not necessarily change behaviour since individuals may personally disagree with a social norm while still conforming due to fear of social backlash or the desire for social belonging. This underlines the importance of designing interventions with social and gender norm change objectives already identified when formulating change strategies. Thus, this also means that the results framework of projects should go beyond measuring individual-level changes and should reflect some of the social and gender norm change indicators presented in the previous section. Additionally, Plan International's GTA should be used to ensure that programme design of CEFM interventions incorporates the six elements that can help accelerate change and tackle the root causes of gender inequality:

1. Addressing gender norms throughout the life-course.

2. Strengthening girls' and young women's agency.

3. Advancing both the condition and position of girls, young women and women.

4. Working with boys, young men and men so that they embrace gender equality and exercise positive and diverse masculinities.

5. Responding to the needs and interests of girls and boys in all their diversity.

6. Fostering an enabling environment for gender equality and girls' rights.

x   **STORMING THE NORMS**
Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

2. DRAW LEARNING FROM EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS THAT HAVE MEASURABLY TRANSFORMED SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS

Evidence-based interventions (EBIs), sometimes called model programmes, are programmes that have been shown to be effective in achieving their intended results through scientific testing, which often implies a rigorous evaluation. Programme developers and implementers can also learn from evaluated programmes from other prevention fields – such as prevention of intimate partner violence (IPV), unintended pregnancy, and HIV – as these have been shown to achieve measurable results and quantifiable improvements in gender equality and reduction of harmful gendered social norms, particularly of the injunctive norms (i.e., normative expectations or what individuals believe others think they should do). Moreover, adapting already evaluated effective approaches to changing social and gender norms could save time and resources compared to developing new ones from scratch. Examples of social and gender norm change programmes are provided in the Summary of Promising Practices section of this report; however, common elements of EBIs identified in their design and implementation include:

- having a rigorously planned, robust theory of change, rooted in knowledge of local context,
- using a gender-power analysis;
- emphasising women's empowerment, and allowing sufficient time for critical reflection and communication and conflict resolution skills building;
- using age-appropriate design and methods;
- having carefully selected and sufficiently trained and supported staff and community change agents to roll-out social and gender norm change interventions; and
- selecting strategies that span across the ecological framework – i.e., strategies from those that primarily focus on working with individual girls, addressing interpersonal communication and relations, to those that operate at the institutional and policy levels

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

3. MAXIMISE THE USE OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMMING ON SOCIAL AND GENDER NORM CHANGE

In order to bridge the gap between research and practice, guides can be developed to help programme developers and implementers use CEFM research for effective programme design of gender transformative strategies to change harmful social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM. For example, once it is known in a particular country context where the exceptions lie regarding a particular gender norm (e.g., men do not do work around the home, however in some communities, younger fathers are starting to help in child rearing), then the programme can identify these 'role models' to diffuse positive messages and model behaviours towards ending CEFM. Regional and country offices can also integrate capacity development on data use for their staff.

4. EXPAND SOCIAL AND GENDER NORM CHANGE RELATED INTERVENTIONS TO INCLUDE REINFORCING POSITIVE NORMS

It is important to note that social norms are not all bad and harmful. As this research tried to explore, social norms can fulfil a range of functions that are deemed useful in communities/societies and there are some positive social norms that promote the value of women and children. For example, there are positive norms around "parents wanting what is best for the child". Therefore, it is important to consider that positive social and gender norms can also be used as a positive force for change. This can be done by providing examples of how the positive norm is actually aligned with the change objective – such as delaying marriage – that can bring positive benefits to girls'. Thus, one strategy that can be included as part of ending CEFM involves complementing interventions that aim to transform harmful norms with interventions that strengthen and reinforce positive ones.

xii **STORMING THE NORMS**
Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

5. CONDUCT FURTHER RESEARCH INCLUDING DETERMINING WHAT HAS SUCCESSFULLY CAUSED NORM SHIFTS

Studies on child marriage have expanded significantly and have contributed to understanding the issue of CEFM; however, there is still a need to gather more evidence to advance social and gender norm change work in eliminating CEFM. These include:

- the need for more evaluation research that measurably demonstrates which interventions successfully cause shifts in social and gender norms, particularly in the context of eliminating CEFM;

- research on the effect of these interventions on girls' and women's agency;

- knowledge on the impact of social norm change activities, including the comparative impact and implementation of single interventions versus comprehensive packages of interventions;

- more formative research to identify examples of positive social and gender norms in intended project communities, which can then be reinforced and used as key entry points as part of interventions to eliminate CEFM.

Finally, to address the dearth of existing work on measuring shifts in social norms in a way that more closely follows social norms theory, this research also led to the development of a practical tools package: the Scoping, Highlighting, Identifying, Formulating and Transforming (SHIFT) Social and Gender Norms Tools Package©. The SHIFT Social and Gender Norms Tools Package can be used to gather and analyse quantitative data and qualitative information on social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM, and to measure shifts in these norms at different stages of the project cycle. It is composed of a combination of newly developed tools and those that are adapted to align with Plan International APAC's priorities and programming around CEFM in South and South East Asia. The tools include methods, activities and guidance to:

1. measure people's expectations of typical and appropriate behaviour for girls and boys and women and men; and

2. understand more deeply the sanctions for not conforming to social and gender norms, and other reasons why particular social and gender norms are maintained and amplified through institutions and gendered power relations.

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

The SHIFT Tools Package aims to support programme, research and evaluation teams to answer these seven critical questions to analyse existing social and gender norms in a community or group and measure their shifts.

1. What are the social norms and gender norms that influence CEFM the most?
2. Why do people comply with social norms?
3. Who are the gatekeepers/powerholders that reinforce social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM?
4. How are the social and gender norms reproduced and amplified through institutions and power dynamics in social interactions?
5. How severe or weak are the sanctions perceived to be for disobeying the norm?
6. Are there 'allowable' and/or 'acceptable' exceptions to the social and gender norms?
7. Are there misalignments between personal attitudes of intended project community members and what they believe are the social expectations in their community/group?

The main elements for analysing social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM presented in the SHIFT Tools Package are:

S SCOPING DRIVERS AND SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS

H HIGHLIGHTING SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS

I IDENTIFYING CRACKS IN THE NORMS AND EXCEPTIONS

F FORMULATING CHANGE OBJECTIVES

T TRANSFORMING SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS

A. OVERVIEW

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

1.1.1 CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE (CEFM) IN ASIA-PACIFIC

Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) is a global challenge and a harmful practice that is widely recognized as a blatant violation of children's rights and the rights of girls and women. Globally, approximately 650 million girls and women alive today were married before age 18.[1] While the rates of child marriage are highest in Sub-Saharan Africa (35 per cent), South and East Asia and the Pacific are the regions with the most cases, with one in three of the world's child brides, or nearly 16 million, living in India.[2,3] Other countries with high numbers of cases are Bangladesh with 2.5 million), and Pakistan and Indonesia with 1.2 million each).[4] Over the past decade the child marriage practice has declined but global progress has varied across regions and countries, particularly in Asia, and is not declining fast enough to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.3 of eliminating harmful practices including CEFM by 2030. With every passing year, we are adding so many child brides to the global numbers, who are going to face all forms of violence, with almost no remedial measures.

CEFM has more significant and adverse effects on girls than on boys, impacting girls' education, social engagement and empowerment, and violating their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), limiting their autonomy and placing them at increased risk of sexual and physical violence. Above all, CEFM creates a cycle of dependence on the in-laws' families, with limited access to resources and a burden of social obligation.

Evidence indicates that the underlying factors that perpetuate CEFM are complex and interrelated. While there are context specific factors, common patterns are identified. The most significant drivers of CEFM are poverty, parents' concerns over their daughters' safety as it relates to honour, lack of access to education for girls, lack of alternatives for girls outside of marriage, humanitarian crises, and adolescent pregnancy. While arranged marriages remain common in Asia, there is also an increase in circumstantial marriages that often result from unintended pregnancy, which may arise from either consensual or non-consensual sexual activity. The percentage of pregnancies of girls aged 15-19 that are unintended in Asia-Pacific has risen to 63 per cent.[5]

1.1.2 SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS PERPETUATING CEFM

Gender inequalities and harmful social norms are root causes that devalue and restrict girls and women making decisions, as well as root causes for CEFM perpetuation.[6] Understanding both social and gender norms has been critical in addressing CEFM. Social norms are what individuals believe others in their reference group (i.e., the group they identify themselves to be a part of) think and do, or what people believe is typical behaviour or expectations about what people should do. Gender norms are a sub-set of social norms and are "social norms defining acceptable and appropriate actions for women and men in a given group or society". Gender norms are embedded in, and reproduced through institutions and social interactions, and are enforced by powerholders who benefit from people's compliance with them.[7]

Having a gender GTA to designing, implementing and measuring programmes to eliminate CEFM, and contributing to the ultimate outcome of promoting gender equality in the long run has been critical in CEFM prevention and response. This approach is used by Plan International in programming and influencing to address CEFM, including in guiding this research. This means that the scope of the

information and data gathered were established with the intention "to improve the condition of girls and women while advancing their position and value in society, and support girls and women to be able to make informed choices and decisions and to act upon these free from fear or threat of punishment".[8] This is in alignment with Plan International's *Getting it right: A Guidance Note for Gender Transformative Programming and Influencing* (2018), underlining that the GTA "focuses on tackling the root causes of gender inequality and on reshaping unequal gender and power relations to realise girls' rights and equality between all...regardless of gender".[9]

Throughout this research, a specific focus was placed on identifying gender norms, as a sub-set of social norms, that perpetuate CEFM in Asia-Pacific. This includes the identification of different manifestations of gender bias regarding social assignment of gender roles, access to and control of resources based on a person's gender, and the participation of girls and young women in decision-making in the household and over their bodies and lives.

1.1.3 TIME TO ACT – PLAN INTERNATIONAL'S WORK ON ENDING CEFM IN ASIA-PACIFIC

For more than a decade, eliminating CEFM has been a strategic priority of Plan International at different levels, including the Asia-Pacific regional level. In this region, Plan International's work on preventing, reducing and eliminating CEFM is led by the APAC Regional Hub, through a regional 'Time to Act!' initiative informed by a comprehensive global framework '18+ Ending CEFM and related Theory of Change'.

This regional initiative has a strong emphasis on influencing and youth-led advocacy and activism, maintaining a firm commitment to evidence-based action and interventions, partnerships, and addressing root causes by tackling harmful gender stereotypes and cultural norms. 'Time to Act!' builds from the four key thematic areas of interventions: ensuring continuous education, youth economic empowerment, protection from violence, and knowledge and education on sexual and reproductive health rights and strengthening related services. Countries involved in this initiative are Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, Thailand, the Philippines, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

In late 2017, Plan International APAC completed extensive research on the prevalence of CEFM in 14 Asian countries, resulting in the report Their *Time is Now: Eliminating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia*. It provides comprehensive details on CEFM in Asia and further consolidates evidence that governments, universities, civil society organisations, and Plan International have generated. It also analyses recent evidence on the prevalence, causes, trends, drivers and impact of CEFM, and outlines actions that must be taken to tackle the issue. In 2018, the 'Time to Act!' report outlined effective and promising strategies and actions that should be pursued to prevent and eliminate CEFM in the region and that have high potential to be replicable in different contexts. In 2019 and 2021, two additional reports were published: one with a focus on youth-led advocacy and activism (*Their Time is Now – Time to Act!*), and the other on the use of digital technologies to end CEFM in Asia-Pacific (*Time to Act - Let's Go Digital!*).

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

1.2 RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

In line with Plan International's GTA, Plan International APAC Regional Hub embarked on this research to gain a more in-depth understanding of social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM in Asia-Pacific, and to contribute to global knowledge of ways to operationalise a GTA to prevent and eliminate CEFM. The research findings facilitated the development of practical tools to counter negative social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM and measure the norms shift. The following questions were used as a guiding framework:

1) What are the key social and gender norms that perpetuate CEFM across the Asia-Pacific region?

1.1) What negative social norms cause and perpetuate CEFM and their root-causes?

1.2) What negative gender norms cause and perpetuate CEFM and their root-causes?

1.3) Where do negative social and gender norms intersect and how does this interplay further aggravate the incidence and perpetuation of CEFM in the Asia-Pacific region?

1.4) To what extent, and how do these social and gender norms further affect and aggravate the situation of married girls in the Asia-Pacific region?

1.5) To what extent is CEFM perceived as a protective mechanism for girls and young women?

2) What are the formal and informal power structures and systems that persist due to the deeply entrenched negative social and gender norms that further exacerbate CEFM in the Asia-Pacific region?

2.1) Who are the key power-holders and decision-makers perpetuating CEFM?

2.2) How are the identified social and gender norms that perpetuate CEFM perceived and amplified in different structures, systems, and sectors? Particularly:

- in laws and policies (i.e., identifying which are gender unequal or gender blind),
- in education (school curricula),
- in employment markets (access to decent jobs for young women),
- in basic services (including child protection services),
- in the health sector (with a particular focus on SRHR),
- and in media across the Asia-Pacific region.

2.3) Who are the key power-holders who need to be engaged to stop CEFM in the Asia-Pacific region?

3) How can the GTA be applied to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of programmes and interventions to prevent and eliminate CEFM in Asia-Pacific?

3.1) What are the recommended counter-measures and interventions based on the GTA that can be implemented to transform identified social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM in formal and informal structures?

3.2) What are the positive social and gender norms that should be promoted to contribute to preventing and eliminating CEFM across the Asia-Pacific region?

3.3) What are the key indicators and tools for measuring shifts in social and gender norms that perpetuate CEFM across the Asia-Pacific region?

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The qualitative research provided insight into issues related to underlying triggers and root-causes of negative social and gender norms that instigate and perpetuate CEFM across a large range of domains in the Asia-Pacific countries (with a particular emphasis on the selected focus countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, and Timor-Leste). In particular, the research is built from and addresses gaps found in the existing body of knowledge, and provides guidance and recommendations to inform efforts to increase the quality of programmatic and influencing responses to accelerate the pace of CEFM prevention and elimination. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the research was conducted remotely.

2.1.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Social-Ecological Model (SEM)[10] was used as a study framework that provided the foundational concept for assessing root causes, as well as risks and protective factors interrelated with CEFM across five levels: individual, interpersonal, community, organisational, and societal/policy environment. This framework views CEFM as the outcome of the interaction among many factors at these five levels. In Figure 1, the overlapping rings in the model illustrate how factors at one level influence factors at another level. It is based on evidence that no single factor can explain why some people or groups are at higher risk for CEFM, while others are more protected from it.

Figure 1 The five levels of the Social-Ecological Model
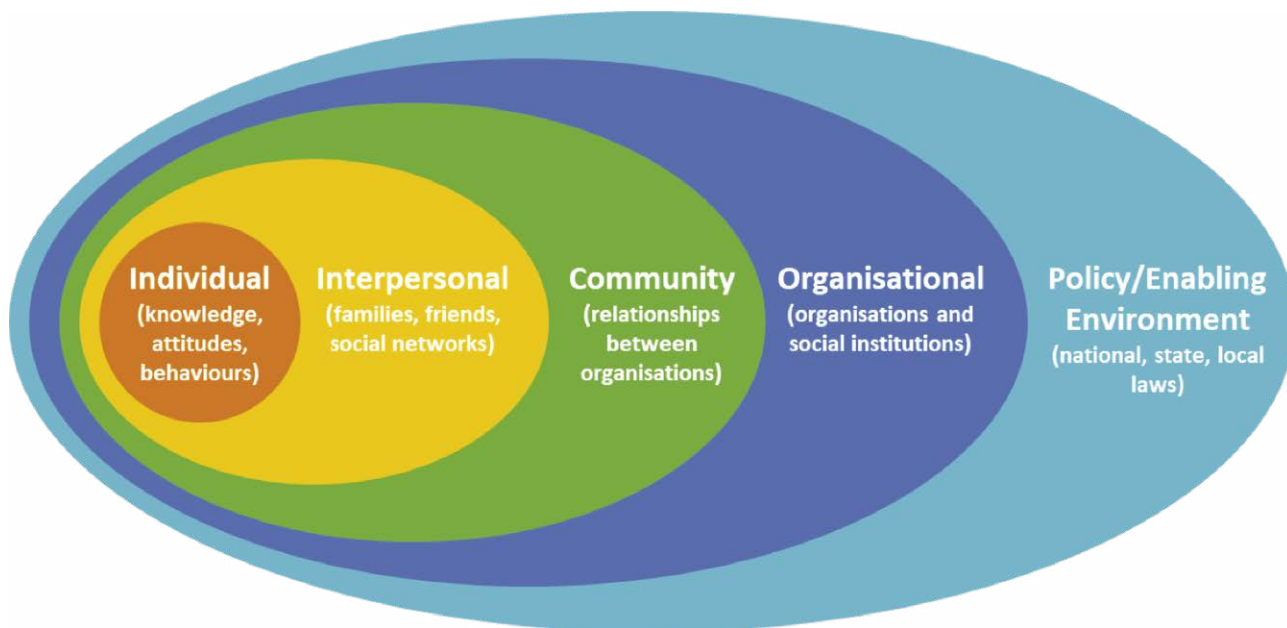
2.1.2 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Qualitative data were collected through a literature review, remote/online KIIs, and online workshops for exploring social and gender norms underlying CEFM. The use of multiple methods in this research is intended for triangulation purposes, as well as to reduce bias. It also is to cross-check the data using a variety of evidence, which will reduce the limitations of any single data source, enhancing the reliability and ensuring the validity of results.

DESK MAPPING

A review and meta-analysis were performed, relevant for the greater Asia region, especially for countries where Plan International has operational presence. Apart from the existing relevant Plan International documents, different types of searches were conducted, including a comprehensive online search across the following databases: CRANK tracker (child marriage research tracker, Girls Not Brides), Google Scholar, Ask Source, Academia.edu, and ResearchGate. Only articles that focus on Asia Pacific, published between 2012-2022 and for which full texts are available in English were included in this research.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Following the desk mapping results, a series of remote/online KIIs was conducted to collect information on the stakeholders' understandings of CEFM, experiences in implementing CEFM-related initiatives tackling social and gender norms (enabling and constraining factors, challenges), practices countering negative social and gender norms, and gaps in the application of a GTA, among other topics. Thirty key informants (20 females and 10 males) were interviewed:

- Plan International staff and/or focal points responsible for coordination of the CEFM-related initiatives (nine informants: one from Plan International APAC and eight from focus countries); and

- Plan International's partner organisations and experts on issues related to CEFM (21 informants).

The KII research questions and guide questions, the consent form, and the list of key informants can be found in Annexes 1, 2 and 3.

VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

There were two virtual workshops conducted in this research:

1) A workshop to gather inputs to inform the development of the practical tools to counter negative social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM, as well as tools for measuring the norms shift was held on 18 April 2022.

2) A validation workshop to present findings and the practical tools to measure the social and gender norms shift was held on 12 May 2022.

The participants of the two workshops were Plan International CEFM focal points.

2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRACTICAL TOOLS PACKAGE

The research was conducted using the co-design[1] principle, and Plan International staff, practitioners and advocates working on this issue were engaged in the development of the tools package to ensure the relevance and accuracy of the strategic analysis needed to counter negative social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM. This tools package includes: a) diagnostic and analytical tools to identify and address negative norms, and b) indicators and metrics for measuring the norms shift. Moreover, the package contains visual frameworks, detailed activities and guide questions to support programme staff in the conduct of formative research, analysis, strategy implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of social and gender norm interventions and projects. Just as with the research's main approach, the developed tools package is strongly informed and guided by the GTA. This ensures that the tools package produced will be fit for purpose to guide Plan International APAC's programming to redress the power dynamics and structures reinforcing gender-based inequalities and discrimination.

[1] Co-design is rooted in participatory design techniques developed in Scandinavia in the 1970s, and the principle of co-design has the following key components: Intentionally involving target users in designing the process; Postponing design decisions until after gathering feedback; Synthesizing feedback from target users into insights; Developing approach and tools based on feedback.

2.3 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The qualitative research design has inherent methodological limitations. These, along with limitations according to the scope of the research are discussed briefly below, along with other specific limitations of this research:

1. Activities were conducted remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and remote primary data gathering was conducted. This limited the selection of respondents, as sufficient internet connectivity was required. Further, remote workshops could present limitations in participation of all respondents and the time available to have detailed discussions. This limitation was addressed by conducting follow-up data gathering via email or the use of forms to gather sufficient input from stakeholders.

2. KIIs were conducted in English, which could limit the participation of other respondents who may not be fluent in the English, thus limiting the number and type of respondents that could participate in the KIIs. For example, interviewees were mostly Plan staff and NGO partners. This limitation was addressed by searching for primary research data that includes information gathered from various countries and communities.

3. Young people were not involved in the KIIs – as specified in the Terms of Reference and discussed with Plan International APAC, this research did not include data gathering with youth due to time and methodological constraints. Nonetheless, this limitation was addressed by ensuring that the experiences and views of young people will be included in the research based on the desk review of other primary research conducted.

4. In terms of scope of the research, the current study does not have a focus on identifying how social and gender norms perpetuate CEFM in humanitarian settings.

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

B. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RESULTS

3 ADDRESSING SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS PERPETUATING CEFM IN ASIA

As mentioned, the Plan International Asia Pacific (APAC) Regional Hub has undertaken extensive and diverse research on CEFM to help deepen understanding of the issue in the Asia Pacific region. In the last decade, Plan APAC's research has contributed to the global knowledge pool on the prevalence of CEFM and circumstances within which CEFM occurs; on the drivers and consequences of CEFM; and on effective strategies, such as using digital technology, to end CEFM and reduce adolescent pregnancy. Additionally, Plan APAC conducted a comparative analysis of approaches to youth activism and engagement to eliminate CEFM.

In all of these research initiatives, social norms and gender norms are highlighted among the key drivers of CEFM (see Figure 2). Deeply-rooted social and gender norms regarding the roles and behavioural expectations ascribed to

girls contribute to CEFM;[11] and, thus, they have been a focus of many studies and programmes aiming to eliminate CEFM. Nonetheless, there is a need to increase the knowledge and evidence of the way that social norms and gender norms perpetuate CEFM through the complex interaction between norms, attitudes and behaviours.

To start, it is important to emphasise that CEFM is not a norm itself, but instead it is a harmful practice or set of practices that is a manifestation of social and gender norms and other factors.[12] Many factors contribute to the practice of child marriage. As can be seen in Figure 2, which is from the report *Their Time is Now*, there are multiple drivers of CEFM, among which social and gender norms belong.[13] Further, the *Time to Act! Gender-Transformative Programme Strategies for Addressing Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Unions in Asia*

Figure 2 Drivers of CEFM (Plan International APAC, 2018)

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

Pacific – Toolkit for Practitioners outlines the main root causes and consequences of child marriage in the Asia-Pacific context, as well as seven key clusters of strategic interventions to consider.[14] Thus, this research does not have an extensive discussion of the other drivers of CEFM – such as poverty and lack of education and other opportunities – on which significant research has already been conducted.

Nonetheless, social and gender norms do not exist in a vacuum, and are reviewed and presented in this report in relation to the other drivers of CEFM (e.g., poverty, lack of access to education, religious beliefs). Special attention is given to the discussion on the relevant socially expected behaviours and gender norms that underpin the drivers, exacerbate inequalities, and influence behaviours and social interactions surrounding CEFM. The presentation of the findings starts with a discussion of definitions and concepts around social and gender norms, which includes literature on the importance of studying these in the larger behaviour change and prevention sciences. This is followed by descriptions of specific social and gender norms, with examples found in South and South East Asia and supported by information gathered from both the desk review and key informant interviews.

3.1 DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTUALISATIONS OF SOCIAL NORMS AND GENDER NORMS

3.1.1 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SOCIAL NORMS, GENDER NORMS, AND ATTITUDES

In brief, norms can be thought of as "the informal rules governing behaviour".[15] **Social norms** are what individuals believe others in their reference group (i.e., the group they identify themselves to be a part of) think and do. It is also what people believe is typical ('normal') behaviour or what other people's expectations are about what is appropriate behaviour. Therefore, social norms influence one's behaviour either because 'other people do it' or 'because other people expect me to do it'.[16]

In addressing social norms to eliminate CEFM, it is useful to note that there are two types of social norms as found globally, including in Asia:

1. **Descriptive norms** (also referred to as empirical expectations): these are shared beliefs in a group or community about what other people normally do. For example: parents marry off their daughters before age 18 because of the belief that "most girls here are already married by the time they are 18". Thus, the parents perceive that the behaviour is common/typical/'normal'; regardless of whether it is approved or disapproved of, and regardless of whether the parents think the behaviour is right or wrong.

2. **Injunctive norms** (also referred to as normative expectations): these are shared beliefs within a group about what is appropriate to do or what is expected of them by others in the community to do. For example: a girl is expected to marry before age 18; regardless of whether the parents or the daughter prefer to wait.

Note that social norms are different from an individual's attitudes, views or values. **Personal attitudes** are what individuals think of specific behaviours, outside of a social context. For example, "I think girls who get pregnant are shameful and should get married immediately to save the family honour."

Gender norms are what people commonly hold as beliefs about what is expected because of gendered prescriptions of society; i.e., the socially constructed rules of behaviour assigned to women and men because of their sex.[17] As mentioned in the current study's Background and Rationale, **gender norms are a sub-set of social norms** and are "social norms defining acceptable and appropriate actions for women and men in a given group or society". Gender norms are embedded in and reproduced through institutions and social interactions and are enforced by power holders who benefit from people's compliance with them.[18]

It is useful to know the key differences between social norms and gender norms as this can help to determine the best ways to transform harmful social and gender norms, including those perpetuating CEFM. Since social norms are what people believe to be the rules of behaviour, they are understood to be people's beliefs about what is in the mind of others. In contrast, gender norms are manifested in the world around us, entrenched in institutions, and reproduced through people's social interactions.[19] Therefore, changing social norms requires changing people's misperceptions of what others do or approve of in their reference group, while changing gender norms requires changing institutions and power dynamics[20] between women and men in society, institutions, and relationships.

3.1.2 IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL NORM AND GENDER NORM CHANGE IN CHANGING BEHAVIOURS

It is commonly known that attitudes toward gender equality affect behaviours such as violence against women. For example, long-held beliefs that men have a right to control women serve as men's justification for any physical, emotional, and sexual violence against women. A wide body of research also suggests that social norms can influence behaviour, and therefore, they can perpetuate harmful practices such as CEFM and reinforce gender inequities.[21] Understanding social norms and gender norms is important in order to change behaviours and practices around CEFM because once a set of behaviours – and rules about the typical and appropriate behaviours – becomes established in a social group, they are then perpetuated because people prefer to conform in order to avoid social consequences or sanctions for not conforming.[22,23]

The growing recognition of the importance of transforming social norms and gender norms is based on social norms theory, which proposes a different approach from traditional behaviour change interventions. In the past, behaviour change work focused on changing individuals' personal attitudes, and increasing their knowledge or skills – mostly through group awareness raising, training or workshops – in order to change behaviours (e.g., improve health-seeking behaviour, prevent HIV, prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG), etc.). However, changing individual attitudes without changing social norms or the rules of behaviour within a group can still hamper individual behaviour change. Thus, although changing attitudes and increasing knowledge and skills are still important for behaviour change, transforming social norms alongside these individual changes may be the missing piece required for changing the most persistent behaviours – especially those prescribed by gender norms[24].

Recognising the importance of social and gender norm change efforts is also aligned with and is part of the holistic strategy of Plan International's '18+ Theory of Change' and 'Regional Strategic Framework Time to Act! COVID-19 and Girls in Asia Pacific', which recognises that to achieve its vision, "Harmful social and cultural attitudes must be transformed, while adequate legal and policy frameworks are put in place, consistently enforced and further reinforced by effective and gender-responsive public services and social safety nets. The inclusion and empowerment of girls, young people, their families and communities are central pillars of this strategic approach."[25] Gender norms and CEFM are closely linked, as CEFM is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. Analysis of the 20 countries with highest CEFM prevalence rates show that all but two were also among the most gender-inequitable countries in the world.[26] This is recognised strongly in the 'Time to Act!' strategic framework of Plan International APAC, which highlights the key strategy of ensuring that "holistic and gender-transformative interventions build on all gender-transformative programmes and influence thematic areas tackling multiple root-causes and creating replicable and effective models to bring about gender transformation."[27]

3.1.3 WHAT PERPETUATES SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS, AND HOW CAN THEY BE TRANSFORMED?

Social norms typically emerge and thrive in environments to maintain the community in a preferred equilibrium, or a state in which opposing forces or influences are balanced.[28] Key to understanding the concepts around social norms and how they may be changed is understanding why they arose and continue to exist. Marcus and Harper (2015) outline the following possible reasons why social norms emerged and what functions they may serve:

a) A way of coordinating action – for example, a mechanism for governing use of a resource (e.g., a norm that leads to sustainable use of forests or fisheries) or a way of preventing the spread of diseases (e.g., a norm about handwashing, or covering one's mouth when sneezing or coughing)

b) An expression of local beliefs – these can be 'non-social', such as beliefs about the value of breastfeeding or the foods that pregnant women should eat, or 'social' beliefs about what others do and think (such as beliefs about how long others breastfeed and think is the appropriate time to start and stop breastfeeding)

c) An expression of cultural or religious values – for example, norms that limit girls' freedom of movement are often related to values concerning the importance of virginity before marriage

d) A means of upholding the social order. This can mean, for example, that:

1. norms can reflect and reinforce inequalities of power (as we will discuss following in relation to gender norms)

2. norms can reflect fear of certain differences, and reinforce stigma and social exclusion (for example, as with some disabilities or stigmatised diseases, such as HIV)"[29]

Additionally, understanding what keeps norms in place is helpful to understand possible pathways to changing a specific norm. Several conditions keep a social norm in place, including:

1. "Social expectations or beliefs about what others typically do and about what others expect one should do.

2. Influential people or reference groups who hold these expectations; this includes 'everyone who matters to an individual,' and has an opinion or prescription about a specific behaviour.

3. Sanctions for not conforming or acting with in what is 'normal'; these usually refer to social backlash or negative consequences; but social norms are also maintained through positive reinforcement or rewards for adhering to a norm."[30]

Figure 3 **What drives changes to gender norms?**

WHAT DRIVES CHANGES TO GENDER NORMS?
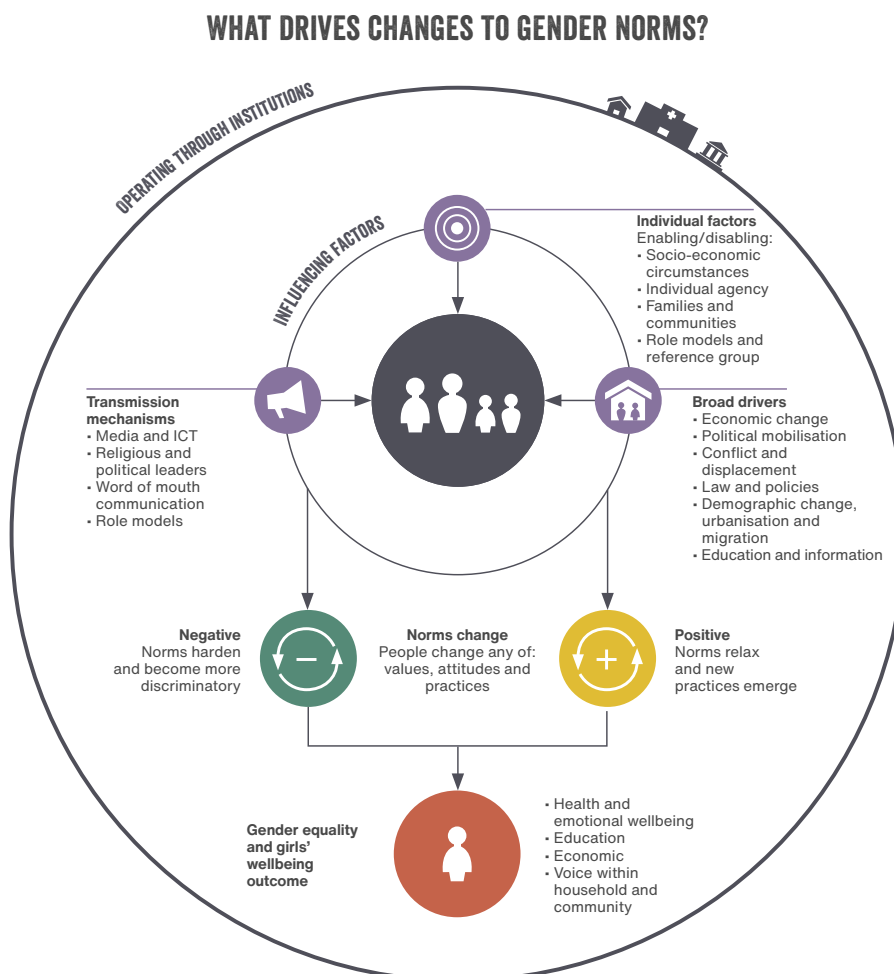
Source: Marcus, R. et al. 2015

Gender norms can be changed by several influencing factors including broad drivers (e.g., economic development, new laws, education, change in demographics, etc.), individual factors (e.g., socio-economic conditions, personal attitudes, knowledge, or skills, one's family/community, personal agency, etc.), and transmission mechanisms (e.g., media, ICT, religious leaders, etc.).[31] As can be seen in Figure 3, social and gender norms can change in one of two ways – they may harden or become more discriminatory or they can relax and allow new practices to emerge. Further, the diagram illustrates that the factors that affect social and gender norms operate through social institutions such as the family, education, state, and other sectoral institutions responsible for delivering services.

One example demonstrating the process of how gender norms change is outlined as follows:

1. Information – parents receive information about the benefits of educating girls, harms of CEFM, laws against CEFM, and girls' right to an education.

2. Informal dialogue between peers articulating the new norms – parents, community members and leaders, and girls themselves, discuss why they think delaying marriage is important (e.g., for health and safety reasons, fulfilment of rights, opportunities for better quality of life, etc.).

3. Modelling new behaviour – families continue to send girls to school, and agree to delay the marriage of their daughter, and girls are continuing to live with their families.

4. Endorsement by role models – religious or traditional leaders promote messages supporting girls' education, they correct misconceptions and state that there is no traditional or religious need for girls to be married at puberty, or recognised role models speak out against child marriage, etc.[32]

It is, however, important to note that the change in social norms and gender norms may only be observed after a period of delay or flux:

> " When people start to behave in ways that diverge substantially from idealized norms of behaviour, the norm itself can often lag behind and take some time to reflect changes in practice. When this occurs, norms can weaken. Tipping point theory (Gladwell, 2004) suggests that once enough people start to act differently – for example, by allowing their daughters to stay on in school and marry at a later age – others may rapidly follow suit. However, there is likely to be a period of flux where old norms are weakening but still in place, before the new norm has fully emerged and sets new standards.[33] "

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

Table 1 consolidates the literature review by Marcus and Harper (2015) presenting conditions that help or hinder changes in gender norms[34]

Gender norms are more likely to change when	They are less likely to change when
• no one stands to lose out economically from change or to gain from keeping old norms in place	• there are strong economic interests in upholding existing norms and practices
• people have a strong economic interest in changing certain norms	• certain groups perceive their power and status to be directly undermined by change
• no one's power is directly threatened by change	• several factors contribute to upholding a norm (e.g., lack of information, pressure of social expectations, economic constraints)
• only one key factor underpins a norm (e.g., lack of information)	• the practices in question are seen to be mandated by religion
• there are no religious mandates requiring a certain particular practice	• very few others have changed what they do
• a critical mass of others who have already changed what they do	1. role models and opinion leaders (including religious leaders) promote the status quo
• role models and opinion leaders (including religious leaders) promote a different norm	2. the broader institutional or political environment is resistant to change
• changes in the institutional or political context provide opportunities for different practices	3. people don't know how to do things differently
• programmes or policies designed to change norms are accompanied by opportunities for people to put new ideas into practice	4. change is mainly experienced as a loss (of power, of valued culture or traditions) or otherwise unwelcome
• change is understood as seizing or preparing for new opportunities	5. change is isolated
• there is change in the wider society – for example, women gain more of a voice or gain new economic power	

Table 1 Conditions that help or hinder changes in gender norms

The next sections will focus on specific social norms and gender norms, although these are also discussed in relation to the key drivers of CEFM. The discussion is organised according to main categories of social and gender norms based on the themes that emerged from this study's primary data gathering and analysis of secondary data and literature. It is acknowledged, however, that these social and gender norms are often interrelated and overlap because they mutually reinforce each other in practice. Lastly, this does not intend to be an exhaustive listing of all the social and gender norms related to CEFM; thus, priority has instead been given to those norms that have been evidenced to perpetuate and/or increase the risks for CEFM in South and South East Asia.

3.2 SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS PERPETUATING CEFM

The practice of CEFM is perpetuated by traditional and patriarchal beliefs towards gender roles and prescribed behaviour. These are rooted in social, cultural or religious customs, which can insulate and perpetuate CEFM[35]. For example, in patriarchal societies women's and adolescent girls' freedoms, access to resources and decision-making are heavily curtailed.

3.2.1 MARRIAGE, GENDER ROLES, AND MOBILITY

Social norms on the centrality of marriage and family honour intersect with women's domestic and subordinated role in the family.

Social norms around the centrality of marriage are prominent among groups that have prevalent practices of CEFM. This norm is underpinned by the beliefs about marriage as a key route to social and economic protection.[36] However, family honour and prestige are often considered to be what is primarily in danger when a couple, especially a woman, makes an independent marital choice.[37] Thus, the social norm dictates that a responsible parent should ensure their daughter is married by early adulthood.

As one respondent in the current study highlighted: "We always talk about marriage/ unions, these are important, family life is quite important and valued in the Lao culture, children are valued. It [marriage] is really the core of the family, the core of the society." (KII respondent, Laos)

Another respondent even termed marriage as 'mandatory' in South Asia:

> " In many South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, marriage is an important social institution and mandatory for all males and females. The society, the family members expect men, for example, that when they come of age or when they are established, have completed their education and started to have a job, then the first task of the parents is to marry them off.
>
> *KII respondent, Nepal*

This view is also aligned with the discussion of another area of social norms in literature, which is regarding the transition from childhood to adulthood. It proposes that, 'to become a woman a girl should marry'.[38] This is related to the belief that a girl's value is limited to being married. One respondent of the current study shared that: "When the girls were still in the womb, they have been proposed to be someone's daughter in law." (KII respondent, Indonesia)

A practical reason given for CEFM in Timor-Leste is around the alliance formed between families.

> " Young women and men need to be in early marriage so that they can strengthen family relationships [between two families allied for generations], and have children and give birth to a new generation.
>
> *KII respondent, Timor-Leste*

The respondent explains further that this ancient tradition has been passed on for many generations, although there have been signs that the norm is weakening with greater access to information and education.

> "Early marriage happens because two families [from girl's side and boy's side] want to strengthen their relationship so they force them to marry even if they don't want to. This relationship between the families strengthens from generation to generation; it's a social norm and an ancient practice and is important for families to respect each other. This is still happening in rural communities, but it's changing a bit now because families are gaining access to information and send their kids to schools.
>
> *KII respondent, Timor-Leste*

In some cases, however, some cultural practices espouse positive norms around marriage and appropriate behaviours regarding marrying after age 18. For instance, a couple of respondents shared that:

> "If we take a look at the purpose of the marriage itself, it is to be beneficial for both [husband and wife]. Actually, this essence of the marriage should be raised up. Child marriage will bring disadvantages to the children. That is how we see it in Islam.
>
> *KII respondent, Indonesia*

One respondent explained how the appropriate age for marriage is tied to their traditional weaving of fabrics:

> "Such as in Lombok, as I remembered. Girls should be able to weave the fabrics in certain motifs. The number of the motifs she weaved shows her age. After she finished 21 motifs, the age of 21 is mentioned, she can get married, as in that age, she can fulfil all those requirements.
>
> *KII respondent, Indonesia*

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

On top of manifesting social norms, CEFM is both caused by and exacerbated by deeply rooted gender inequalities and restrictive gender norms.[39] Attitudes toward gender equality affect behaviours that increase the risks of CEFM. For example, in the Plan International APAC Their Time is Now research (2018), discriminatory social and gender norms that value girls primarily in terms of their reproductive capacities are critical to understanding early marriage. The traditional and patriarchal beliefs towards gender roles, where it is assumed that girls will undertake domestic roles, rather than economic productive roles or roles as leaders within their communities, directly increases risks for child marriage since girls are married off in order for them to fulfil their prescribed gendered roles.[40] If social norms prescribe that a girl's primary role in life is to be a wife and have children, there are few opportunities available for her to go to school or earn a living. Thus, she inevitably fulfils the wife and mother roles.[41]

This gender norm around the roles and responsibilities of girls misleads parents to believe that girls are not worth the economic investment of sending them to school since they are only good for staying at home and childbearing and child rearing. Additionally, expectations for girls to give birth while they are young drive greater pressure to marry them early.[42] Consequently, these gendered norms on roles and responsibilities limit women's mobility, education and economic and political participation, which further exacerbate girls' risks for CEFM. This is one of the clearest examples of how social and gender norms reinforce the practice of CEFM, which then, in turn, limit girls' empowerment.

Gender norms restrict girls' mobility

A baseline study on social norms conducted by CARE (2020) in Nepal and Bangladesh found that even though girls' opportunities for education and related activities have improved over time, their mobility is still quite restricted in both contexts.[43] There are various reasons underpinning this gender norm, including parents' tendency to protect their daughters from public sexual harassment and sexual violence, religious traditions, and gender biases embedded in judgments of how a 'good girl' should behave to protect the family honour.

In Nepal, girls and parents believe that the community associates girls 'roaming around' with the risk of harassment, teasing, or assault by other 'roaming' boys.[44] In Bangladesh, 'purdah', or the seclusion of women and the rigid segregation of work along gendered lines severely restricts the mobility of girls and young married women alike.[45] It is useful to note that, although purdah is generally associated with Muslim societies, it applies to both Hindu and Muslim women in Bangladesh due to gendered work patterns that are specific to Bengali culture.[46]

One adolescent respondent in the CARE baseline shared that:

> "
> If I go out alone the villagers will say, 'This girl wanders around too much'. They will come up with bad ideas about me. When people from the groom's side will come to see me, the villagers will say, 'She roams around too much'. This is why it is not good for a girl to go here and there.
>
> *Adolescent girl, Bangladesh[47]*
> "

Restrictions on mobility are interrelated to the gender norm that girls are property of the family and need to be protected, and girls' value rests in their ability to safeguard their families' reputations and maintain their families' honour. One of this current study's respondents stated that:

> "
> Any family who has a daughter of 16 or 17, they tend to be very cautious and safeguard the mobility of the daughters, who then do not have the agency to go out even to go to school alone [without being accompanied by a male family member].
>
> *KII respondent, Nepal*
> "

The respondent continues to relate it to how child marriage is a way to transfer the parents' burden of protecting their daughters:

> "
> This fear of protecting the honour of the family pushes the parents to get a good husband so the daughter may be hauled off to the boy... It is basically a transfer of your security burden from parents to in-laws.
>
> *KII respondent, Nepal*
> "

3.2.2 IDEOLOGIES AND TRADITIONAL BELIEFS REGARDING SEXUALITY, SRHR, AND FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY

Sex and sexuality are taboo subjects for girls and boys to learn about and discuss, girls especially need to conform to standards of 'purity'.

Social norms shape how sexuality is viewed, expressed, and curtailed.[48] A common example of one such social norm is the expectation that young unmarried people should not learn about, discuss, or act upon their sexuality and that they should remain asexual until marriage. Gender norms around sexuality make the situations worse for girls and are a key drivers of CEFM. "Patriarchy upholds gender norms that privilege what is considered male or masculine. It undermines the rights of women and girls – including to control their bodies and sexuality – and restricts opportunities for women, men, and gender minorities to express their authentic selves."[49]

Moreover, the belief that girls' pre-marital virginity should be preserved in order to protect her and her family from the risk of shame or dishonour drives parents to arrange early marriages for their daughters.[50] This 'protection' is both from sexual assaults and consensual sex with other young men their daughters could have a relationship with.

One of the current study's respondents reiterated that:

> "
> [Child marriage is promoted] in order to prevent adultery, to prevent the sinful acts. So, instead of letting their children befriend the opposite sex, it is better to get the children married. They called it 'khalwat', meaning when children already are friending with the opposite sex, so marriage is the best way.
>
> *KII respondent, Indonesia*
> "

'Khalwat' is a term associated with how young people's sexuality is controlled in Indonesia. It is used to refer to prohibited behaviour of an unmarried and unrelated man and woman being alone together. Additionally, practices of restricting girls' mobility were connected with this belief of the need to curtail girls' interaction with boys, and to control girls' sexuality via restricting their freedom of movement.[51] As discussed previously, this restriction on the mobility of girls is also a result of the roles assigned to women and girls mainly to be in the home domain. This shows how social norms reinforce each other and mutually strengthen and reproduce the biases promulgated by each.

Closely related are the gender norms around girls' expected 'purity'. A respondent in the CARE baseline mentioned: "I think this whole notion of what an ideal girl should be, this emphasis on purity – that is the most important norm that is leading to discriminatory practices." (Interview with Nepal research team, April 2015).[52] Additionally, "where norms dictate that girls must not engage in sexual activity outside of marriage, transgressions may lead to stigmatisation, violence, or even murder."[53] This is in contrast with norms of masculinity; boys are expected to be virile and have the freedom to have more than one sexual partner, and fathering many children, particularly sons.[54]

Further, harmful social and gender norms are maintained due to the lack of information and access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and SRHR information and services.[55] One of the current study's respondents highlighted that: "There is such poor sexuality education, no education for parents to teach their children on healthy sexual behaviour and reproductive health."

The pervasive control and regulation of sexuality, especially adolescent girls' sexuality, are critical and often unaddressed manifestations of gender inequality.[56] Women and girls are extremely constrained in their freedom to express their sexuality because girls are valued for their virginity. Thus, in such circumstances, marriage may be viewed as the only legitimate scenario for engaging in sexual activity; while families and communities are motivated to ensure girls are married, regardless of the girls' dreams or wishes,[57] in order to maintain the prevailing patriarchy.

Adolescent pregnancies, and the social and gender norms restricting choice and opportunities for girls interact as main drivers perpetuating CEFM.

Early pregnancy is both a precursor and consequence of CEFM. In countries in Asia where pre-marital sex is seen as a violation of social norms, adolescent pregnancy plays an important role in driving child marriage. For example, the scoping survey conducted for the 'Yes I Do' project (2016) found that seven out of ten child marriages in Indonesia were a result of a girl becoming pregnant. Early marriage is often a way to conform to norms that dictate that girls who engage in sex should be married, and this is mirrored in Timor-Leste as well[58].

This driver is largely underpinned by the social and gender norms around the dishonour brought by an adolescent girl's pregnancy, and indeed even the exercise of her sexuality, to the family. In fact, the two issues are so interrelated that regions that experienced the most significant declines in child marriage also saw the most marked reductions in the adolescent fertility rate.[59] One respondent shared that, "When the teen is pregnant, they are forced to marry in a culturally appropriate way." (KII respondent, Timor-Leste)

Other respondents pointed to CEFM as a 'solution' to the problem of pregnancy and pre-marital unions between girls and boys: "When the girl and boy live with each other, then they must be forced to get married to avoid any bad impact to the whole community. And also to prevent the bad story in the whole community." (KII respondent, Cambodia)

Another respondent stated that pregnancy and early marriage are a mutually beneficial arrangement for the girl and boy:

> " The solution of the unwanted pregnancy is the child should be married. In society, we don't have any solution once a child experiences unwanted pregnancy. Unwanted pregnancy is sometimes seen as a mutual interest between the two (the girl and boy), so the only solution available is to be married.
>
> *KII respondent, Indonesia* "

The issue of early marriage and unions, however, is a more complex issue. Some girls opt for early marriage or union as a strategy to escape poverty. Nonetheless, poverty as a driver of CEFM in this case does not act alone – it interacts with gender norms that limit opportunities for school, work, and income for girls. The situation, where girls feel forced to enter into unions to spare their families from having an extra mouth to feed,[60] is also due to the gender norm that girls are expected to be dependent on their husbands and their husbands' families.

This was also shared by girls in Laos: "The reason the girls wind up being pregnant is also because they feel somewhat safe in becoming pregnant because there is this promise from the boy that he will take care of her and they will get married." (KII respondent, Laos)

Apart from poverty, the practice of CEFM itself drives young girls to early marriage. To avoid the fate of her parents choosing whom she will marry, she opts to enter into a chosen union and get pregnant instead. A study in Nepal found that young couples enter early marriages because they felt that their right to choose a life partner, the process and time for marriage has been denied.[61]

> " Another type of early marriage is due to early pregnancy. Some girls are disappointed that their parents want to marry them off to a boy they don't choose themselves [an arranged marriage], so they prefer to get pregnant with a boy they choose as protest to the arranged marriage.
>
> *KII respondent, Timor-Leste* "

3.2.3 ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OF RESOURCES

Traditional gender norms disadvantage women and girls regarding their access to resources and the benefits from those resources.

To complement poverty reduction and education strategies, tackling negative gender norms and reinforcing positive ones are needed to increase the share of girls' access to resources related to economic development and education.

Poverty has been cited as a key driver of CEFM in much research, including in that conducted by Plan International APAC. The practice of CEFM allows families to save on having to pay a higher dowry, decreases their financial burden of an extra mouth to feed, and reduces education costs or investment.

Several respondents in the current study share the same reason for the gender norm of not investing in the girls' education:

> " From the beginning of the birth of the daughter, parents think that this daughter is not for us. For the time being this daughter will be with us, and after that, the daughter will go to another household. So, they don't actually want to invest on the daughter for her education.
>
> (KII respondent, Nepal)
>
> Many parents believe that when the girls completed the study, they will go away and serve other families, but for the boys they will stay and then serve their family. So that's the strong cultural belief that still happens in rural areas.
>
> *KII respondent, Timor-Leste* "

It is important, however, to note that this norm of leaving girls out of resource allocations in the family early on is actually a result not just of poverty, but also of another gender norm: that the daughter is expected to go and live with the husband's family and depend on him to be the sole provider in some contexts. Further, inheritance laws also discriminate against girls in contexts where family wealth is passed on only to male heirs. Women may also not have the same right or ability to borrow money and own land as men, resulting in greater economic disadvantage of women being perpetuated from one generation to the next.[62] Lack of access of poorer households to infrastructure can also aggravate the grip of social and gender norms. For instance, in Hmong communities in northern Vietnam, limited communications infrastructure limits access to ideas that might change gender norms.[63]

Thus, while poverty itself is not a social or gender norm, we know that wider economic changes and access to education and information can contribute to changes in norms about gender roles perpetuating CEFM.[64,65] Economic support and incentives, such as scholarships or cash transfers, are CEFM prevention strategies to help families overcome financial barriers to girls' education. However, as mentioned, poverty does not act alone as a driver of CEFM. This is why providing economic incentives alone, while necessary, will not be sufficient without focused resources on shifting gender norms around what roles are appropriate for girls and boys, and how girls can contribute to household economic stability.[66]

For example, changing norms that make it more 'typical' and 'acceptable' to invest in daughters' education and young women working outside the home in India and Bangladesh were largely due to more people recognising the economic benefits of increasing girls' access to resources and to the benefits of these resources.[67] Additionally, among Hmong communities in northern Vietnam, better road links to local markets have brought opportunities for girls to earn money, for example, by selling wine and vegetables at these markets, which is also only possible if girls are allowed to be more mobile.[68]

In short, changing gender norms around the girls' education, mobility, and participation in public life outside the home can support economic development and poverty reduction; this can make child marriage less of an economic necessity, which, in turn, can further result in new norms about the value of girls' contributions to the community and delay marriage.[69] Additionally, how girls are empowered to take control over resources within a supportive and enabling environment is critical since girls' actions to access education also become an important driver of norm change.

Moreover, it is important to note that discriminatory gender norms are not only the outcome of poverty; they also exist in households with higher economic status. For instance, among communities where son bias is strong, sex-selective abortions are more common among better-off households, since poorer households cannot afford them. Thus, "discriminatory gender norms are not only the outcome of poverty and affect women and girls of all economic backgrounds."[70]

Education is key to changing social and gender norms as well as helping to reduce poverty, but gender norms around the girls' roles also need to be changed alongside improving education access. Similarly to economic development, providing access to education contributes to this positive cycle of transforming gender norms for greater gender equality and preventing CEFM. Data in Asia is very telling:

> "
> In Laos, 45 per cent of adolescents with no education between the ages of 15 and 19 were married. In Myanmar 19 per cent of adolescents who had never been to school had begun childbearing. Without an education, adolescent girls cannot find employment, and this is exacerbated by societal norms that place little value on women's contributions from outside the home.[71]
> "

However, gender norms also limit the access to education:

> Many families cannot envisage a life for their daughters that does not involve early marriage. In rural areas, access to education may be lacking, in part due to gender inequalities that do not allow girls the mobility to go to school in the next village. In the absence of access to education and economic opportunities, particularly in poor rural settings, it is challenging to raise awareness about the harmful effects of early marriage. In such settings, child marriage is often seen by community members as a viable way to safeguard a girl's future given the lack of any other options.[72]

There are a few matrilineal and matrilocal ethnic groups, however, women and girls are still not assured equal participation in decision-making in these communities

There are exceptions to the previously mentioned traditional norms regarding women's and men's access to resources, as can be observed in some indigenous matriarchal societies. "For example, in some indigenous communities of South and South East Asia, including indigenous nationalities of Nepal and certain tribes of India, Thailand, and Cambodia, women enjoy a high social position, and their status is not low in comparison to their male counterparts."[73] There are matrilineal societies in which women own the land and are responsible for land decisions in their clans; this ownership of land gives women in these communities a relatively higher status compared to women in patrilineal societies.[74] Additionally, it appears that land gives women more legitimacy, bargaining power, and recognition to claim other rights and other roles in the public sphere.[75] Further, it is recognised that decision-making regarding land is an important aspect of empowerment.[76] One

example is the Bunong community in Cambodia, in which wealth is traditionally controlled by the wife's family.[77] Additionally, men share the responsibility for the comkaa (home), and the Bunong also practice matrilocal residence, whereby the husband goes to live with the wife's community.[78]

One of the respondents of the current study highlighted the unique aspects of the Bunong:

> In the Bunong communities, the woman and the man share decision-making; and they discuss with each other regarding household investments. For example, regarding the buying of expensive farming machinery. Sometimes, children are given an opportunity to give an opinion. Women make a decision regarding healthcare, but they'll always ask the men. For instance, regarding using birth control, they consult each other regarding the number of children.
>
> *KII respondent, Cambodia*

Another respondent spoke about the matrilineal exceptions in Timor-Leste:

> We have a strong patriarchal system; priority is given to the boys with the belief that boys will inherit the wealth of the family and lead the family. But in some areas, we also practice the matrilineal system where women are prioritised and where they are responsible for the wealth of the family. Thus, how the girls and boys are treated depends on which system they are in.
>
> *KII respondent, Timor-Leste*

Another example is in the matriarchal Tharus community in India, wherein property is owned by both men and women. "Women spend their income freely without any advice from their men relatives. In several matrilineal tribes such as Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia of north-eastern hills of India, women are entitled to hold exclusive land rights and inherit ancestral properties. However, their elevated status within the family is not reflected in the bigger politico-rural canvas of the society. Certain influences of colonial and dominant cultures and traditions on indigenous peoples have placed indigenous women in a difficult situation in terms of playing effective roles as custodians of their cultures."[79]

Moreover, a matrilineal society does not always guarantee that women will have an active role in decisions about land use.[80] The status, authority, and power of women vary also across different matrilineal groups, and women's positions appear to be stronger when post-marital residence is matrilocal, rather than patrilocal.[81] However, the patriarchal structures and gender roles are not absent even in matrilineal communities, as men are visible and play an important role in the well-being of the households and communities.[82]

Similar male dominance in matrilineal societies was also observed in Timor-Leste, wherein men controlled the access and management of the ritual knowledge about fertility and the relationship with ancestors.[83] Additionally, "the Catholic Church in Portuguese Timor provided schooling and other types of instruction for women with the apparent purpose of producing European-style wives, skilled in the domestic duties but strictly limited to household and private realm, which was, in turn, viewed as inferior to collective spaces."[84]

Son-preference is a practice underpinned by longstanding and strong gender norms, and also results in harmful gender norms.

Son-preference or bias is a practice most prevalent in communities where daughters are perceived as an economic drain on the family,[85] because they will require a dowry and will join another household anyway upon marriage. In Nepal, it is also not acceptable for parents to accept financial support from their daughters.[86] Thus, son-bias is closely related to gender norms around access to resources, including time as a key resource. These norms include: unequal access to education (because parents regard boys' education as a better investment or boys as more deserving of education).[87] For example, reasons for son-preference in India are that a son is seen as continuing the lineage, providing support to his parents in their old age, enhancing the family status, and bringing in dowry.

Thus, gender discrimination towards daughters can lead to the practice of "eliminating daughters before birth". In other households, particularly poorer ones, a daughter may be discriminated against in terms of food, health, and education, as well as being forced to marry early to avoid paying a higher dowry and decrease costs of her upbringing. The practice of son-bias also results in grave consequences for women who do not give birth to a son. Social sanctions heavily penalise wives who do not produce a son, such as these women may have a lower status if they do not produce sons, and they can also be ill-treated, beaten, divorced, or abandoned[88].

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

3.2.4 PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

Social norms around the expected obedience to elders, filial piety, and age hierarchies aggravate gender norms that hinder girls' voice and agency.

Parents' decisions to have their daughters married off at an early age is often motivated by the intention to do what they believe is best for them – to protect them from shame, sexual assault, or economic challenges (particularly in communities where there are few educational or economic opportunities for women). These justifications, as well as strong religious and cultural prescriptions, strengthen the norms around the primacy of obeying one's parents and elders.

One respondent shared that:

> "
> Some children know and understand what's happening regarding child marriage, but since they are powerless and economically dependent on parents, they do not have a power to make decisions for themselves.
>
> *KII respondent, Timor-Leste*
> "

These are closely related to social norms about parenting. Many cultures in Asia put a high value on not only obedience to parents, but also on the parents' ability to command this obedience. In this sense the social norm for parents to be authoritative – and the gender norm for fathers to lead decision-making and mothers to support their decisions – all contribute to girls being invisible in decision-making regarding their marriage.

> "
> In the rural areas, mostly child marriage is caused by the culture, that they have to obey their parents' orders. They have to respect their parents. If they talk back to their parents, they will be considered not polite. That norm still exists in many rural areas.
>
> *KII respondent, Indonesia*
>
> The younger the person, the less they're allowed to speak out because it's always expected to obey the elder. That's a very strict norm here, the [age] hierarchy. Laos is very strict and the hierarchy is so strict, you're always to defer to your elders.
>
> *KII respondent, Laos*
> "

The social norms intersect with the gender norms in patriarchal societies where women and adolescent girls lack the ability to make choices about their sexuality,[89] thus dictating that a girl should obey her parents in regard to timing and choice of marriage partner.[90] This is even more so since girls need to be taught how to fulfil their most important role in society, which is to be a mother and a wife, thus, also strengthening previously discussed gender roles. Moreover, there are strong social backlashes and consequences for going against norms that control girls' sexuality[91].

Nonetheless, it is important to note that parents' desire to give their daughters the best opportunity possible, given their circumstance, can be considered as a positive norm that can be leveraged to introduce information about harmful effects of CEFM. Some respondents alluded to this positive norm around how some parents want their daughter to have a good job

> " In the case of the district where I work, there is this good thing that, since people of this district are not so well off economically, they want their children to get a government job because of the beneficial economic status. That's why parents pressure for child marriage is much less in this area. Because the parents in this community more enforce their children's technical education.
>
> *KII respondent, Nepal*
> "

Mothers' and girls' decision-making is hampered by gender norms prescribing their subordination and obedience to male members of the family.

The gender norm that dictates the social expectation for the men to be the head of the family limits women's participation in the household regarding their child:

> " During regular sessions with the Mothers Group, most of the time the mothers express that they don't want to marry off their child at a young age because they have gone through the same experience. But they are bound to take decisions on their child's marriage because the male members in their family are forcing them. So, all the patriarchy is there.
>
> *KII respondent, Bangladesh*
> "

The position of the man as the head of the family is even institutionalised in government systems (e.g., the system of registration):

> " ...The accesses are still held by men, because the registration system only acknowledges men as the head of the family. Including in accessing government assistance. As our culture is patriarchal, automatically the decision is taken by the father. The father is the one who has the right to marry off the daughter. While the wife tends to obey and follow what the husband wants, and it is not common that they will be fighting not to marry off the daughter.
>
> *KII respondent, Indonesia*
> "

26 **STORMING THE NORMS**
Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

This is also related to the above-mentioned norms around ideologies of masculinity, and how this is reinforced in the communities that expect fathers to exercise this masculinity, especially in household decision-making. This is also then passed on to boy children:

> " Of course, our research has shown that it is the father who makes the final decision. And he makes the decision because of peer pressure, pressure from his elder brother or even his mother. So, we need to engage men, and also the boys. The boys are told that now he has to marry a young girl, he will then follow the model of masculinity he was taught and mirror the same 'masculine' traits in his marriage with the girl.
>
> *KII respondent, Nepal*

Social norms around parents taking the decision about child marriage intersect with the gender norms limiting participation of a girl in decision-making regarding her own marriage.[92] Several respondents in the current study shared how curtailed girls' voice and decision-making is:

> " They did not ask the opinion of the girl, 'Do you agree or disagree?' Whenever they talk about marriage, parents of girls will say yes.
>
> *KII respondent, Bangladesh*
>
> They believe that girls cannot go outside, girls cannot do these things, girls cannot say these things, girls cannot take the decision.
>
> *KII respondent, Bangladesh*

It is important to note that gender norms around decision-making vary widely across countries, provinces, communities, and families. One example of a positive norm regarding decision-making is observed among the Kalashas in Chitral, Pakistan, where Kalasha women can choose the man she wishes to marry. Additionally, women who earn a living in their community control their income, and have a say in matters related to the children's health and education.[93]

Decision-making in the household depends on who earns a salary rather than on gender; however, it is also observed that there is poor communication between spouses regarding budgeting and that males control ownership and decisions about properties.[94] Nonetheless, the increase in women's access to work, mainly as police or security officers in their remote community, has led to their increased empowerment.[95]

A respondent from a study conducted by Belen and Minhas (2021) also emphasised that Kalasha women enjoy greater freedom of mobility and participation in decision-making regarding the children's education:

> " In general, Kalash women can go alone to the hospital and go out alone; they inform their family before leaving, but they don't need permission or a male companion. About the children, both mother and father will decide equally; it comes down to earning. In Kalash, after high school you have to send your children to downtown, whoever is earning will decide if the child will go to the city for further studies.[96]

Nonetheless, CEFM has also traditionally been practiced among the Kalash: "When reaching puberty, unless she decides to leave her village and go to college in Chitral town, the Kalasha girl will get married at the age of 16 or 17 (sometimes at 14!) with the young man she chooses. Occasionally, marriages can be done by arrangement. The newly married young woman will not immediately move into her husband's family home. She may go back to her father's home for some time and then come back to her husband's family home where she normally settles down after the birth of her first born."[97]

Moreover, Kalash religion dictates that Kalash women stay in a hut outside the house (called bashalini) during menstruation, a strict religious norm that needs to be followed by all means.[98] Also, gender norms regarding roles and responsibilities exist, and a Kalasha woman's life is intertwined with hard labour from early childhood, with girls as young as six-years-old fetching water from the stream or gathering small twigs for the fire so that her mother can cook the tasili (bread), prepare tea or milk for her and her brothers or sisters, and struggle to go to school through narrow uneven and precipitous paths or cliffs.[99]

3.2.5 SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender norms exacerbate inter-generational harmful effects of CEFM on married girls and their children.

Gender norms around the girls' reproductive roles and controlled mobility not only perpetuate CEFM, but also exacerbate the harmful effects child marriage has on girls. Early pregnancy is one of the most dangerous consequences of child marriage, particularly when the mother is very young. Although births before the age of 15 are quite rare in Asia, in Bangladesh, 4.4 per cent of girls aged 15 to 19 gave birth by the age of 15, and nearly one in four women (24.4 per cent) aged 20-24 had at least one live birth before age 18.[100]

Moreover, adolescents that begin childbearing at an early age are essentially excluded from important development opportunities because gender norms dictate their primary role to be that of caregivers in the home. Gender inequalities and the burden of care that young married girls assume mean that they lack the mobility to move to areas where there are better prospects of employment,[101] thus, further propelling women and girls and the children of adolescent mothers (girls and boys alike) into a cycle of poverty and exclusion.

Married girls are at heightened risk of domestic and intimate partner violence and other forms of gender-based violence.

Girls married at a young age are more at risk of domestic violence, abuse, and forced sexual relations, which is deeply ironic and contradictory given that many parents marry their daughters at an early age with the intention of protecting them.[102] For example, in India, the earlier a girl marries, the more likely she is to experience intimate partner violence.[103] In some contexts, when a young married girl goes against the gendered roles and restrictions on their mobility (e.g., leaving the home without her husband's permission), she is subjected to domestic violence by her husband, and sometimes, even by her mother-in-law.

One respondent also cites VAWG as an effect of getting married young:

> " It's difficult for both girl and boy children to have understanding about their rights. They don't know how to have a good relationship and the understanding of rights within the family is poor. Sometimes violence happens and sometimes parents of the boy or girl child intervene.
>
> *KII respondent, Timor-Leste* "

Norms pertinent to toxic patriarchal masculinity condone physical violence against women and girls, particularly once a girl is married. The intimate partner violence experienced by married girls is widely known in communities and in many circumstances considered 'normal'. For example, in Hmong communities in northern Vietnam, girls reported that the most desirable characteristic of a potential husband was for him not to be violent.[104] One respondent of the current study shared that this 'normality' of violence against women and girls is perpetuated even by service providers, typically expected to support VAWG survivors:

> " We have a meeting about the justice service with the Justice Department. From the survey, 60 per cent of the officers perceived that it is normal for a husband to beat their wife. The police also espouse victim blaming attitudes: They ask the girl, 'Why, did you do something wrong?', 'Why did you not cook well.'
>
> *KII respondent, Laos* "

28 **STORMING THE NORMS**
Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

The lack of protection from the implementation of laws also aggravates the normalisation of VAWG. One respondent shared that:

> " The child protection mechanism or protection from violence mechanism is not very strong in Laos. So even when a child marriage happens, or to annul marriage or to report it as violence is very difficult. It's not only child marriage, but other aspects of violence are very difficult to address as well.
>
> *KII respondent, Laos* "

Gender norms dictate that after marriage, a girl should always follow all of her husband's instructions, and that she should be and do everything that the groom's family expects. This also leads to all kind of violence against girls and women being condoned. Respondents in Nepal also highlighted that some women perpetrate violence against other women, particularly from extended family members, including mothers-in-law:

> " Sometimes I feel that like, women are discriminating against women rather than men. So for a married girl, she's more given torture by her mother-in-law rather than her father. She will be expected to do so many things, and also to follow so many customs, traditions, practices: on how she's dressed up, how she speaks, what she does, where she goes, everything. The mother-in-law presents a big problem rather than a father-in-law. So just in that case, I want to share that sometimes, like, females are more dominated by the female rather than by the male.
>
> *KII respondent, Nepal* "

Additionally, some married girls who experience violence have no or highly limited options to exit the abusive relationship, as the shame of divorce keeps women from seeking help when they are abused or threatened.[105] Further, normative expectations about marriage being the most desirable state for women reinforce other gender norms such as women are expected to withstand abuse and greater domestic workloads, women should defer to their husbands' decisions to keep the peace, and women should be grateful to her husband for the economic support for the household, which 'buys' men the right to an obedient and deferential sexual and domestic woman.[106] These norms are reinforced by, and further reinforce, women's lack of access to resources (financial assets, education, employment), and contribute to their subordinate power position within the marriage, resulting in girls' inability to leave abusive marriages.[107]

In addition to domestic violence, child and forced marriage in the Philippines was also closely linked to the trafficking of children. Girls and young women are trafficked domestically and internationally for domestic work and sexual exploitation, with mail-order bride services and 'sponsorship' playing a sinister role in supporting and concealing this exploitation.[108]

4 FORMAL AND INFORMAL POWER STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS THAT FURTHER EXACERBATE NEGATIVE AND HARMFUL GENDER AND SOCIAL NORMS PERPETUATING CEFM IN ASIA-PACIFIC

Harmful social and gender norms are embedded in, and reinforced by, other macro-environmental structures and systems.[109] These include the laws as well as the political and justice systems in a country; the education, health, and economic sectors and institutions that women and men, girls and boys and gender diverse groups all encounter; the social structures in communities and religious institutions; and even the environment and geography of a country. Key to understanding social norms and gender norms is understanding who stands to gain from maintaining the status quo and existing power imbalances and inequality in families, communities, and institutions.[110]

4.1 KEY POWER HOLDERS PERPETUATING CEFM WHO NEED TO BE ENGAGED

The following sections discuss the formal and informal power structures and systems existing in families, communities and institutions, beginning with the description of the power holders who are instrumental in maintaining the social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM.

4.1.1 FAMILY LEVEL

The father is the main power holder in the family. He is the head of the family as well as the primary decision-maker. This includes the control over matters related to his wife, and also over his daughters' marriages. Several of the current study's respondents indicate this power vested in men:

> " Mostly, the early child marriages are decided by the fathers or men in the in the family.
>
> *KII respondent, Timor-Leste* "

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

Another noted that the father also acts in this manner as a result of social expectations from him:

> " Yes, the father, most of the time, decides. First the father, but the father takes the decision also because of peer pressure from the other male members of the society, and again, male members of the family – elder men in the family and extended family, and also from the society.
>
> *KII respondent, Bangladesh* "

On respondent highlighted that, not only are the decisions the responsibility of the fathers but also so is the 'ownership' of the daughter:

> " The girl's body, since they are child, doesn't belong to them, but belong to the family and their fathers. So, the autonomy of her body belongs to the father, then their husbands. They don't have such rights on their body. This phenomenon is impacted by the perception that women are just an asset, a thing or a property, which is caused by gender bias.
>
> *KII respondent, Indonesia* "

Other respondents cite other relatives of the family also have a say regarding the marriage of the girl and can add pressure to the parents.

> " Other relatives, the brother, sister of the parents – we call it uncle and auntie – they're the ones who pressurise the daughters to get married, or the parents to decide quickly about the marriage of their daughters. And they come with a pretext saying that 'It is the time for your daughter to get married, she has come of age,' and then if there is a very good family and the boy is very good and is working, 'I have come with their proposals... why don't you marry her off to that particular family?' So, there is also immense pressure from the relatives for the parents of a daughter to marry her off. This has been a common practice in Nepal.
>
> *KII respondent, Nepal* "

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

4.1.2 COMMUNITY LEVEL

In the community, religious leaders, community leaders and local elites (such as wealthy and highly educated members of the community), as well as community elders have considerable power regarding decisions around a girl's marriage. One respondent of the study stated that: "For example, in Hindu cultures, whether a boy is a fit for a girl or not, it is decided by a priest." (KII respondent, Nepal)

Other respondents across different countries highlighted several actors, particularly faith leaders:

> "Other key actors or stakeholders are religious leaders. Then the marriage register, marriage matchmaker. These are playing key roles to have a child marriage.
>
> *KII respondent, Bangladesh*
>
> Sometimes parents also consult with this traditional faith leaders, for family reputation. So, I think they play some important role also not only in conducting the union but also in providing advice and such.
>
> KII respondent, Cambodia
>
> We also engage with the traditional leaders, faith leaders and local leaders because they also have the important roles in the community. So, they can also influence the decision of the parents.
>
> *KII respondent, Timor-Leste*
>
> In the Hmong ethnic group, it's not only the parents or the in-laws that matter, but it's also the clan leader that matters. And they are the ones who kind of make decisions on who's going to get married to whom. The clan leaders are really important and much more powerful than the village leaders; the village leader or authority is actually a government official.
>
> *KII respondent, Laos*

At the community level, apart from influencers in decisions regarding to whom and when a child should marry, there are also power holders that deliver social sanctions when families deviate from the norm. "Neighbours and villagers were widely recognised as powerful perpetuators and the source or transmitter of rumours in cases of girls' deviance of this norm. Both girls and their parents (especially fathers) expected strong sanctions for girls moving around in and around the village, for reasons other than those that were strictly educational," (CARE Tipping Point Social Norms Findings, 2020)

One respondent gave a specific example of this, and cited that community leaders and members have more of an influence because of the social backlash that they can inflict on families that do not conform with the norms:

> "For example, rejecting the marriage proposal is taboo, because this will make it harder for girls to find partners in the future. This kind of belief is somehow more difficult than the religious interpretation to be explained. Some people are not afraid of going against the religious terms, but they are afraid of going against the cultural belief. Moreover, if the religious interpretation is blended with the cultural aspect, this will be more difficult to fight.
>
> *KII respondent, Indonesia*

4.1.3 INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

At the various institutions, power holders also refer to those that are critical to engage in efforts to eliminate the practice of CEFM. The current study's respondents include government officials in religious offices and marriage registration offices, as well as justice system actors such as the police, teachers and health workers:

> "
> Begin with those who sign the marriage permit, such as the local leader of the surrounding, the head of the village, the marital institution officer. Those are some offices that we expect to prevent child marriage."
>
> *KII respondent, Indonesia*
>
> Teachers are important because they are really key people in terms of education, including comprehensive sexuality education. And the health workers because of access to contraception.
>
> *KII respondent, Laos*
> "

> "
> The religious affairs office is the central, critical one. They should have clear understanding on child marriage. It is horrible, when the officer of the religious affairs office said 'Why we have to stop the marriage while the parents all agree, the children also agree?' There are still many of the religious affairs officers who say this.
>
> *KII respondent, Indonesia*
>
> At the sub-national level, local authorities, the police, community chief and other government authorities and all channels of the sub-national government need to be involved in any of discussion, because they are the ones who are important in implementing or applying the rule of law.
>
> KII respondent, Cambodia
> "

4.2 STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS AMPLIFYING AND ESCALATING SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS PERPETUATING CEFM

As mentioned, social and gender norms do not exist in a vacuum and they are typically embedded in, and further reproduced by, structures and systems. Gaps in economic well-being and lack of access to education are often cited as key drivers of CEFM. However, while being important structural and systemic factors, provision of economic resources or access to education alone cannot address the underlying social and gender norms that create inequalities between women and men girls and boys in accessing these. For example, "Conditional cash transfers are currently gaining popularity as a tool for postponing the marriage of adolescent girls, but Amin et al. (2016) caution that this approach is unlikely to address social norms in communities and within marriage. They and others advocate a broader view of programme impact, to include access to education, realisation of rights, and efforts to change norms."[111]

Additionally, social norms and gender norms can hinder or help behaviour change. "For example, in the life of a married adolescent girl: laws, facilities and supplies may be in place to allow her to access family planning services; she may be aware of available methods and personally approve of and want to use contraception; and she and her husband agree to wait to have children...But if she belongs to a community that holds dear to certain norms, such as immediate childbearing among new brides, it will be very challenging for her to break through these social norms in order to use contraception and even if she does, she may face significant backlash."[112]

Figure 4 Gendered norms and beliefs contributing to child marriage
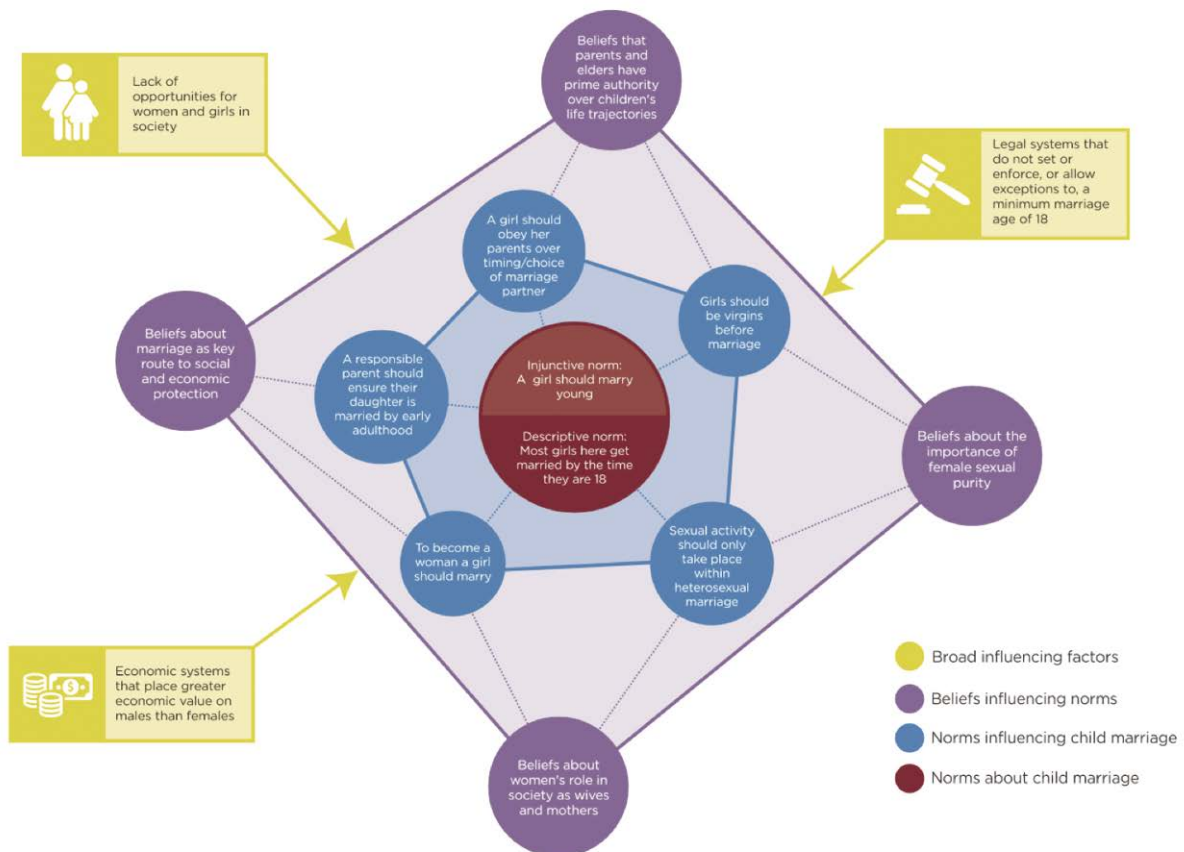
Source: Greene, 2019

Greene (2019) presented a useful diagram that shows the interaction of social and gender norms with other wider macro-environmental factors (see Figure 4). The figure highlights those institutional gaps such as insufficient enforcement of laws, lack of education opportunities, and gender biases in economic systems that all interact with social and gender norms – strengthening their hold and maintaining the patriarchal and inequitable status quo. On the other hand, "when the practice of child marriage persists despite growing institutional and normative constraints on it (national minimum age of marriage laws; a global normative environment rejecting the practice via treaties and declarations; growing awareness of the health harms of early pregnancy; the strengthening of a global norm favouring girls' education), it is because the social norms supporting the practice are strong, and the structural environment facilitates it."[113]

4.2.1 GENDER INSENSITIVE LAWS AND POLICIES

International norms and the policy and legal frameworks of the majority of the world's countries uphold rights-based principles aiming to end child marriage.[114] Nonetheless, despite there being laws prohibiting child marriage and setting minimum age requirements for marriage across most of the 14 countries where Plan International works in Asia, many are gender biased and allow for a lower minimum age – 1 to 4 years younger – for girls than for boys (e.g., in China the age of marriage is 20 for women and 22 for men; India 18 for women and 21 for men; Pakistan 16 for girls and 18 for boys).[115] However, the minimum age does not refer to the recommended age for marriage; instead, it is just a minimum threshold to ensure child protection. Plan International promotes the position that girls and young women should be free to choose and decide if, when, and whom to marry.

Moreover, there are also exceptions to the minimum age, which further amplify social and gender norms decrying pregnancy outside marriage as shameful. For example, in Cambodia, the legal age of marriage is 18 but Article 5 of the Law on Marriage and Family (1989) allows for the marriage of children upon the consent of their parents or guardians if the girl becomes pregnant.[116]

One respondent shared that some laws that allow for exceptions for religious and cultural reasons present a dilemma:

> "
> Supreme court regulation No. 5/2019 on dispensation presents a dilemma, because on one hand this can be a way of letting child marriage happen. So, the parents who want their child to be married may use this regulation. On the other hand, if this regulation does not exist there would be so many nikah siri (religious/cultural marriage), which is not registered legally.
>
> *KII respondent, Indonesia*
> "

Enforcing legislation prohibiting child marriage can be complex, particularly in countries that have established plural legal systems and where marriages are also conducted under customary, traditional, or religious laws.[117] In Indonesia, the legal age at marriage was established by the Law on Marriage of 1974 as 21, "but the true permitted minimum age is 16 for girls and 19 for boys, with parental consent required when either party is under the age of 21 years (18+ Coalition, 2016)." Additionally, a 2002 Law on Child Protection makes parents accountable for preventing underage marriages. Nonetheless, like Bangladesh, Indonesia is governed by religious and traditional laws as well as statutory laws, and these traditional laws and customs have led in some areas to allow marriage below the age of 15.[118] In India, "the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006 establishes punishments for those who do not prevent child marriage and includes a right to the annulment of child marriages, but the Act relies on families to report violations, so it is in itself self-defeating."[119]

One respondent also emphasised the strength of customary laws:

> In terms of law, there is a law against child marriage. Not much adherence to the law, though. There are many different reasons about it. And the other thing about law is there are customary laws that are not legal, but these have very strong influence.
>
> *KII respondent, Laos*

Moreover, social and gender norms also play a role in how effectively (or not) these laws are implemented. In Bangladesh, government inaction and complicity by local officials allow child marriage to remain unchecked.[120] Nonetheless, criminalisation of child marriage is a complex issue, and could inadvertently strengthen biased gender norms and result in other negative effects for girls such as: "Girls are punished for not reporting the assaults they are victims of; girls face social stigma, retaliation and mental distress associated with putting family members in prison" (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2020 child marriage and law). For instance, the Punjab provincial assembly passed a law in March 2015 increasing the penalties for parents and clerics who assisted in marriages between children, although the law left unchanged the legal minimum age for girls to marry at 16.[121]

In a recent study in Nepal, it was found that more than three quarters of child marriage cases reported are due to the unmatched caste and social status, which has become the major context of law enforcement for the punitive actions. The cases of child marriage are converted to rape, kidnapping, and trafficking cases because the legal treatment for child marriage cases is light whereas punishment for rape is severe. Respondents further revealed that complaints of child marriage are made only if caste, religion and social status do not match between married couples.[122]

One respondent spoke about the importance of changing mindsets, and social and gender norms alongside legal implementation:

> Yes, the policies and laws are there, but when it comes to actual implementation, as we all know, it's been seriously lacking in all these countries. That's number one. And number two is that policies have a top-down effect. But if you don't have a bottom-up approach, in terms of changing harmful, social norms and gender, if you dismiss social and gender norms, it will not have any impact, right? So it means changing behaviours, mindsets, attitudes of communities, parents, teachers, families, and having religious leaders, CSOs, the police and the justice system work with you. But when you look up and make sure that all stakeholders understand that this is a harmful social norm that needs to be combated to begin with, and then make sure that the voices are heard in the policy space. That's where much more work was with them.
>
> *KII respondent, Asia-Pacific region*

4.2.2 RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

Social norms perpetuating CEFM are reinforced through religious and cultural traditions and beliefs.

Religion is cited as a key driver of early marriage in India, Pakistan and Nepal as religion guides the selection of one's spouse and reflects group identity.[123] One respondent of the current study gave an example of how one's religion, ethnicity and caste is of great concern to parents and community members:

36   **STORMING THE NORMS**
Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

> " Especially in the Muslim and Madeshi community, they actually don't allow their children to get married to another religion or another ethnic community. So, if a Muslim girl or boy falls in love with someone from another religion, they actually do not allow that. They force them to marry someone from the same community. Similarly, for a boy of Brahmin ethnicity, the parents will not allow their boys to marry a girl from a Dalit community.
>
> *KII respondent, Nepal*

Another respondent shared that:

> " The textual perception will lead people to see that child marriage is better, as seen in the example of the prophet Muhammad and Aisyah's marriage. This is also propaganda for staying away from adultery.
>
> *KII respondent, Indonesia*

For others, the religious pressure comes from the desire to ensure their salvation. One respondent cited the belief in Hinduism:

> " from the ancient Hindu religion which is still being practiced in certain communities, there is a term called Konya, acquired by giving away a daughter before puberty. That will help the parents to achieve salvation or reach heaven.
>
> *KII respondent, Nepal*

Norms around caste as an important driver of CEFM

In addition to religion, cultural practices around castes are an important driver of CEFM. A recent study in Nepal found that more than one fourth of the respondents reported that young adolescents are increasingly likely to choose their own partner. This drives parents to marry off their children out of fear that their daughters might elope with a boy of a lower caste, different ethnicity, or of lower social status.[124]

The social perception has even criminalised young and adolescent love affairs between so-called unmatched religion, class and caste: "While recognizing different forms of marriage, classical Hindu texts and oral traditions in South Asia depict love marriages as instances of transgression that threaten group solidarity. Since inter-caste and interethnic courtships and marriages complicate the mechanism of the social reproduction of caste system, patriarchy, and unequal gender relations, parents, kin, and communities fiercely resist these practices despite the fact that the caste system has been officially abolished for a long time."[125]

Moreover, the caste system particularly places increased pressure on girls of lower castes to be married at younger ages.[126] For example, the importance of caste in Nepal forces families to accept available spouses, as the pool of eligible partners may be limited, particularly in remote rural areas.[127]

STORMING THE NORMS   37
Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

4.2.3 SECTORAL SERVICES (E.G., EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, HEALTH/SRHR)

There is persistent gender-based inequality in educational institutions, including in the quality of access to education.[128] Specifically, girls face numerous barriers to education such as gender-based violence (including sexual harassment on the way to and from school and in school); lack of menstrual hygiene management in schools, affecting attendance; a lack of female role models, particularly in school administration and management positions; and also, gender-biased educational curricula, which can reinforce negative gender norms such as limiting roles and behaviours for girls.[129] Moreover, married adolescent girls also face discrimination in the education sector. For example, boys are not required to leave school as consistently as girls when they marry, even though CEFM can have a negative effect on boys' schooling as well despite limited evidence.[130]

Additionally, there are also barriers to employment opportunities for young women, such as gender segregation in fields of study that limit girls' options to participate in male-dominated fields, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), which offer better pay and higher status in society.[131] In some communities, gender norms and stereotypes often discourage women from even working.[132] Further, girls and young women face disadvantages when it comes to social and economic resources and safety nets. These disadvantages can include discriminatory inheritance rights, and lack of access to loans and other financial services. This inequality, perpetuated in social, economic and political institutions, results in material consequences for women's economic independence[133] and curtails freedoms that are necessary to decrease the risk for girls and young women to experience CEFM.

Girls and adolescents, particularly those with low levels of education and those who are married off, often lack access to age-appropriate health services.[13] This often leads to pregnancy and childbearing before age 18, causing considerable health risks to girls. "In Bangladesh, nearly one in four women (24.4 per cent) aged 20-24 had at least one live birth before age 18. In Laos, 47 per cent of 15-19-year-olds already had at least one child, while the average age at first birth among 15 to 19-year-olds was very low at 16.6 years."[135] Moreover, due to patriarchal norms, girls and young women lack freedoms related to self-determination and bodily autonomy.[136] Activists in Asia have bemoaned the gross lack of access to comprehensive sexual education and respect for the sexual and reproductive health rights of girls and young women.[137] Further, inadequate quality CSE and barriers to contraception have contributed to high rates of unplanned pregnancy among adolescents, which is also a key driver of CEFM.[138]

5 RECOMMENDATIONS ON COUNTER-MEASURES AND INTERVENTIONS THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED TO TRANSFORM IDENTIFIED SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS PERPETUATING CEFM IN FORMAL AND INFORMAL STRUCTURES

This section presents a brief summary of recommendations based on the research findings. It draws from the literature, including findings from Plan International APAC's body of research, as well as from the KII respondents, on what countermeasures and interventions can be implemented to transform social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM in formal and informal structures. Additionally, the focus on social and gender norms is aligned with Plan International's Global Policy on CEFM, which emphasises that the practice of CEFM is grounded in harmful gender norms, including the control of female sexuality.[139] It is also notable that most, if not all, of the recommended actions are aligned with the key components of the dimension of change on Social Norms, Attitudes, Behaviours, and Relations of Plan International's action-oriented 18+ Theory of Change.

Invest in and implement girls' empowerment initiatives

Although it has been established that it is important to engage communities in social and gender norm change, it is critically important that programmes also empower women and girls socially, economically and politically in order to provide them with the knowledge, skills and tools to fight the gender inequalities that they face.[140] As evident from the research findings, in highly patriarchal societies, internalised oppression (or the belief that they should accept their subordinate role in society) among women and girls is common and will require concerted efforts to change. Empowering girls

and women to claim their rights and access opportunities (e.g., education and economic opportunities) can help gender norms shift when community members observe them in new roles, and achieving returns and results that are beneficial for families and communities. When girls become more aware that "education opens up opportunities for a better life, for them and their families – one that goes beyond marriage, motherhood and (in rural areas) small-scale farming. This creates a virtuous circle, as educated girls are typically more accepting and supportive of gender equality, develop greater self-confidence, and are more able to voice their opinions and influence decisions that affect them."[141]

Engage young people as partners in youth-led activism

Young people are crucial partners of a successful gender-transformative project, and as research findings show, programmes are more effective when they engage youth as partners for change rather than just as participants.[142] Indeed, girls' ability to speak up for their own rights played a major part in the achievement of some of the organisations' results; once girls asserted their own rights, it was generally easier for other people, such as their parents, to support their decisions. However, as The YP Foundation points out, "young people don't just run on motivation and fresh air"; strong support networks are needed, as well as strategies that include connecting participants and graduates with on-going learning and development opportunities.

It is important that support mechanisms and a strong enabling environment are provided for youth activists' effective participation as well as protection, as this was discussed in the research findings. These include greater public investment in child participation in civil society agendas and structures; legal reform for the fulfilment of girls' and young women's rights (inheritance, land ownership, borrowing and loans, marriage, and the prevention of gender-based violence); and improved implementation of national child protection laws and international human rights treaties.[143] Youth-led campaigning and policy advocacy was key in Yayasan, Plan International Indonesia's campaign aimed to empower girls and boys to be change agents to advocate for the government to accelerate policy implementation on child marriage prevention. The project succeeded, not only in forming youth-led and girl-led movements, but also in securing commitments from the national and subnational governments to synchronise regulation and law enforcement on child marriage prevention at the district and village levels.[144]

Work with faith-based leaders to transform harmful social and gender norms

Based on the research findings, work with faith-based leaders is critical as they are often viewed as the 'gatekeepers' of their communities and they have considerable influence.[145] It has been found that "as faith leaders become aware of the harms of CEFM, they may become champions of CEFM prevention, using their power and voice to influence normative and customary practices."[146] For example, in Thailand, Islamic committees have joined government agencies to raise awareness and prevent child marriage under Islamic traditions.[147] "Engaging these leaders in open dialogue provides them with the opportunity to express their viewpoints, challenge themselves and each other, and develop gender-equitable norms."[148] In Nepal, UNICEF and UNFPA created a public service announcement that features Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Muslim leaders denouncing child marriage.[149]

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

Influence individual family and community awareness and attitudes around social and gender norms that impact girls' education

Research finding show that social and gender norm changes require providing sufficient space for dialogue and conversation. Dialogue can help influence parents regarding valuing girls and supporting their daughters' aspirations. Moreover, interpersonal conversation in the family and community facilitates development of shared values and it can increase acceptance of girls' desire for education.[150] Part of the conversation can be to reflect on and draw out positive attitudes and norms, and increase awareness of the education challenges and options that can be taken to positively influence family decisions about schooling their children. Dialogues and converstions should also highlight the negative consequences of child marriage on a girl's education, health and well-being. However, caution should be exercised in order to not to alienate or chastise parents since many families see child marriage as the only option to safeguard their children's future, and they believe they are acting in their children's best interests.[151] In addition to education being key for exposing girls and boys to new knowledge and ideas, including gender equality, education (particularly secondary education) is associated with reduced support for child marriage because girls' own desire for education becomes an important driver of norm change.[152] Further, increasing community engagement and social support for education can help local communities to build a sense of solidarity and ownership of the change efforts and their results.[153]

Deliver gender-sensitive, context-specific, flexible and relatable CSE and SRHR information and services

It is critical to challenge the social norms around gender and sexuality. This is paramount for strengthening girls' ability for choice and freedom, especially regarding their bodily autonomy, sexual and reproductive rights, and life plans in general – all of which are closely related to the issue of CEFM.[154] As highlighted in Plan International's Global Policy Brief on CEFM, for CEFM to be eliminated, "it is crucial to challenge these harmful social and gender norms to ensure that girls and young women have autonomy over their bodies and their sexual and reproductive health and rights."[155] A good example is Plan International's 18+ programme and the Girls' Power Initiative, which support participants to feel more comfortable speaking about sexuality, communicate positive messages about sexuality, dispel notions of 'normal–abnormal', and move away from feelings of guilt or judgement. Another example is from Plan International Timor-Leste, which created 'Reprodutiva', a new smartphone app that is helping to combat teenage pregnancy in Timor-Leste by providing teenagers with real-time information and remote access to sexual reproductive health services and information.[156] Moreover, to address the negative impact of CEFM on girls, sexuality and SRHR interventions with VAWG prevention components could also help if conducted with young married couples, facilitating dialogue and gender equal and harmonious interpersonal relations between young wives and their husbands. This, in turn, could pave the way to breaking the CEFM cycle.

Engage men and boys as change agents

As primary power holders in most communities, institutions and families, men and boys should be engaged for social and norm change efforts. It is critical that they are not just alienated as opponents and perpetrators of inequality (or violence), but are engaged as allies and change agents to decrease acceptance of unequal gender roles, violence and CEFM. Male traditional and community leaders, for example, can play a key role in tackling child marriage in their communities as champions, role models and supporters of girls' and women's activism. Further, engaging men and boys makes efforts to challenge patriarchal social norms more sustainable.[157] Changing ideas about masculinity can provide more views that support gender equality and women's empowerment. For example, in Nepal, some boys reported that they wanted to do a better job of being supportive husbands and fathers compared to older generations; or in Vietnam, some Hmong boys perceived that men and women with more equitable relationships were less likely to be poor and more likely to lead happier lives, while others reported that they had learned to listen more to their sisters and would negotiate with their parents on their sisters' behalf over unwanted marriages.[158] Another example is the Plan International project Building Better Future for Girls in Bangladesh, where champion fathers are bringing child marriage to an end in rural Bangladesh. Along with champion mothers, champion fathers are trained on the causes and consequences of child marriage, as well as the importance of birth registration and keeping girls in school.[159] Fathers are also given information about Bangladeshi law, government education initiatives, and child marriage prevention strategies, which empower them to intervene when a child marriage could be taking place.[160]"

Use multipronged strategies to optimise gender equality laws and strengthen their implementation

Legal and policy reform and advocacy remain an effective route for promoting gender norm change, especially when sufficient resources are dedicated to implementing reforms and when they are complemented by other approaches.[161]

- First, to support any policy advocacy initiative, promoting public acceptance of gender equality laws should be included.[162] Engaging community and traditional leaders and the public can be done through various ways – including through dialogues, conferences, using the social media platforms to create discussion fora, and community-based meetings – so people will understand the new laws and the benefits of adherence and penalties for breaking them.[163]

- Second, it is critical to strengthen capacities to implement, particularly at local governance units, down to the village levels.[164] This should ideally involve sensitising police and justice officials on gender issues, CEFM and prevention of VAWG, and human rights principles, as well as delivering more 'adolescent-friendly' services.[165]

- Third, it is also useful to promote joint accountabilities and sharing capacities between local administrations, the justice system and service providers.[166] An example of strengthening CEFM Laws is ensuring that effective birth registration systems are accessible to all local officials to prevent falsification of identity documents.[167] A good example is Plan International Bangladesh's project 'Building Better Future for Girls', which supports a District action plan to end child marriage in Kurigram, which strengthens local-level child protection systems to address and respond to child rights violations (especially child marriage and birth registration) to protect girls from child marriage and other harmful gender norms and practices, increase community value for girl children, challenge gender stereotypes, and take action to stop child marriage.[168]

C. APPLYING A GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH TO TRANSFORM SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS PERPETUATING CEFM

According to Plan International Asia Pacific Regional Hub's resource, Time to Act! Gender-Transformative Programme Strategies for Addressing Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Unions in Asia Pacific: Toolkit for Practitioners: a gender-transformative approach aims to promote gender equality and tackles the root causes of gender inequality to reshape unequal gender and power relations to achieve the full realisation of girls' rights and equality between all children, young people and adults regardless of their gender.[169]

Effective gender-transformative approaches critically need to be grounded in strong gender analysis and an understanding of local contexts,[170] particularly in order to tackle harmful and restrictive norms that negatively impact women's and girls' rights, freedoms and access to resources. In terms of programming and influencing work, Plan International further defines six elements that can help accelerate change and tackle the root causes of gender inequality:[171]

7. Addressing gender norms throughout the life-course.

8. Strengthening girls' and young women's agency.

9. Advancing both the condition and position of girls, young women and women.

10. Working with boys, young men and men so that they embrace gender equality and exercise positive and diverse masculinities.

11. Responding to the needs and interests of girls and boys in all their diversity.

12. Fostering an enabling environment for gender equality and girls' rights.

Moreover, a gender transformative approach aims to tackle the root causes of gender-based exclusion and discrimination.[172] "It aims to improve the condition of girls and women while advancing their position and value in society. It supports girls and women to be able to make informed choices and decisions and to act upon these free from fear or threat of punishment."[173] Additionally, this approach advocates for the allocation of more national resources to gender issues – with girls' voices and their priorities considered in these budgetary processes – as well as policies that adequately protect girls' and women's rights, tackle the barriers they face, and meet their needs.[174]

As mentioned, this research builds on existing studies and knowledge generated through Plan International APAC's 'Time to Act!' multi-year research efforts to end CEFM. These have outlined diverse strategies to end CEFM, including those needed to address drivers of education access, poverty and sexuality. To avoid duplication, the next section will, thus, only feature practices that focus on social and gender norm change strategies using a gender transformative approach.

6 SUMMARY OF PROMISING PRACTICES OF USING A GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH IN COUNTERING SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS PERPETUATING CEFM

The Plan International APAC Regional Hub has recently published the 'Collection of testimonies on preventing and ending CEFM in Asia Pacific' (2022). It features testimonies from youth activists and other stakeholders working to eliminate CEFM in the region. One of the impressive testimonies was from Tien, who was selected as the head of his Champions of Change Club in Vietnam, where they organise monthly meetings for members to share their experiences, advise each other when their parents force them to get married, and host community events. He emphasised the importance of involving others to change the social norms and prejudices that form part of the root causes of child marriage: "I always believe that ending child marriage is not the sole responsibilities of girls and women, but boys and men are also key factors to make a change," he said. "If both boys and girls work together to persuade their parents, their collective power could win."[175]

Nonetheless, there is still a lack of evidence on the impact of longer-term interventions, including efforts to change norms related to CEFM. Many of the evaluation reports focus on changes in attitudes, with some indications of changes in behaviour; however, there are not many that have measured effectiveness in social and gender norm shift.[176] Further, there is a dearth of existing work on measuring and monitoring shifts in social norms in a way that more closely follows social norms theory.[177] This research aims to address this gap, and below are some of the promising practices that have a specific focus on changing social and gender norms through a gender transformative approach. All but one has had some measurable success determined by rigorous evaluations, mostly conducted with an experimental design. The SNAP Framework implemented by CARE is the exception, as it is a promising practice for Creative Evaluation (and has not yet undergone meta-evaluation); and is among very few pioneering works measuring social norm change. These evidence-based interventions (EBIs) could provide lessons from which to draw when designing programmes to counter social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM – particularly regarding the multilevel nature of the interventions addressing intersecting drivers of CEFM and their underpinning social and gender norms across the socio-ecological model.

Girls' empowerment supported by multidimensional programming addressing various intersecting drivers, with successes on scaling-up

The Towards Economic and Sexual Reproductive Health Outcomes for Adolescent Girls (TESFA) programme was launched by CARE in 2010, in order to mitigate the challenges faced by married adolescent girls in the South Gondar zone of the Amhara region of Ethiopia.[178] The programme provided married girls who are already married with peer-driven education about sexual and reproductive health, and support for economic empowerment and financial management. TESFA combined CARE's successful Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) model within peer-led girls' groups, and Social Analysis and Action (SAA) with adult community members to address the social and normative barriers faced by adolescents, especially married girls. TESFA also engaged community leaders and elders in dialogue and education about factors that perpetuate CEFM.

Notable programme results include a 72 per cent increase in the proportion of girls having their own savings, increased communication between young wives and their husbands, decrease in GBV, improvement in mental health among participating girls, increased investments in economic assets and knowledge, improved use of sexual and reproductive health services and family planning, and increase in girls' social capital and support from the community.[179]

Moreover, TESFA+ was then designed to scale up TESFA through two mechanisms, which 1) integrate the model into government structures, and 2) diffuse and replicate it through community groups. To date they report significant results including reaching over 5,000 girls and working to improve their economic empowerment and sexual and reproductive health status.

More on investigative research evaluating TESFA+ at: https://www.care.org/our-work/health/adolescent-health/tesfa/

Family-based interventions

Sammanit Jeevan is a participatory, group-based and family-centred model to reduce intimate partner violence (IPV), including domestic violence from mothers-in-law. Its aim is to change harmful gender and social norms and improve young married women's economic conditions through women-led income generating activities (IGAs). Sammanit Jeevan was conducted in Nepal by VSO (adapted from Zindagii Shoista, which was adapted from 'Stepping Stones') and was implemented in rural villages of the Baglung district, a recently conflict-affected area. This intergenerational programme has a workshop series that combines three elements: gender transformative norms, economic empowerment, and IGAs support.[180] After the workshops, evaluation results revealed that younger women were exposed to less controlling behaviour from their husbands and less physical IPV 18 months later when compared to the baseline data. Findings also showed that the intervention increased young women's past-month earnings and savings, which more than doubled over time. Moreover, they workshop participants perceived that their mothers-in-law were less cruel, and improvements were observed in young women's individual and perceived community gender attitudes.

Gender transformative norms training manual at: https://www.whatworks.co.za/documents/publications/curricula/219-gender-transformative-norms-manual/file

Mobilising community members and leaders using organised diffusion

Tostan's Community Empowerment Program (CEP) uses a structured community education and awareness raising to mobilise communities against harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and early marriage in Senegal.[181] The programme is specifically gender transformative, as it seeks to increase knowledge of and support for the rights of women and girls, and addresses the gendered power imbalances in the community by engaging all members of the community – from the highest-ranking elders to girls in the community.[182] This has led leaders to raise awareness of and sometimes make public declarations against harmful practices.[183] The CEP has three components:

- a 30-month curriculum on democracy, human rights, problem solving, hygiene and health, literacy, and numeracy;

- the Community Management Committee, a 17-person community group tasked with implementing the vision emerging from the classes in collaboration with the whole community; and

- 'organised diffusion' – wherein class participants share their learning with peers, family members and committee members to raise awareness throughout their locality.[184]

The programme was evaluated to have successful results in decreasing approval for FGM/C in the family and community (thus changing injunctive norms or normative expectations) through organised diffusion, which had begun to shift norms for both the participants and adoptees (or members of the same families).[185]

More about the evaluation results of the programme at: https://tostan.org/wp-content/uploads/Cislaghi2019_Article_ChangingSocialNormsTheImportan-1.pdf

Engaging boys and men

The A More Equal Future: A MenCare Manual to Engage Fathers to Prevent Child Marriage in India was created by Promundo and World Vision to combat the social and gender norms that devalue girls and perpetuate child marriage.[186] The gender transformative manual provides guidance on how to engage fathers to prevent child marriage, and provide a safe space for men, their partners and their daughters to reflect on and redefine what it means to be men and fathers.[187] The programme forms men's groups and facilitates changes in deeply rooted social norms and promotes new behaviours of taking on equitable responsibility for raising their children without violence, valuing their daughters as they do their sons, and contributing more to domestic housework.[188] The programme also improves men's understanding of how gender inequality supports the institution of child marriage; promotes healthier coping mechanisms and positive masculinities that reject alcoholism; increases men's understanding of violence and promotes non-violent, caring relationships; and promotes shared decision-making of household budgeting and investment.[189]

The manual is available at: https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/more-equal-future-mencare-manual-engage-fathers-prevent-child-marriage-india/

Delivering entertainment education along with couple-based interventions

Change starts at home is a multicomponent intervention for the prevention of IPV against women implemented by Equal Access in Nepal. The community engagement strategy has four core components:

1. A 39-week, 'edutainment' radio programme involving drama and discussion elements

2. A 40-week couples curriculum delivered to 360 married couples via weekly facilitated listening and discussion groups (LDGs)

3. A wider community engagement largely through LDG-organised activities

4. Trainings for religious and community leaders (Clark et al. 2017).[190]

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

The pathway to change envisioned had three distinct phases:

   a. A critical reflection phase

   b. A skill-building phase (where couples are exposed to and learn new life skills)

   c. A community mobilisation phase, which encourages organised diffusion through community actions delivered by the LDGs.

Among those who heard a message directly, 76.6 per cent (of a total group of 549 people) spoke to someone about it, most often a neighbour, followed in frequency by a friend, and then spouse.[191] Further, the direct messaging and organised diffusion also increased behaviours to support survivors of violence.[192]

More information on the evaluation study can be found at: https://www.whatworks. co.za/documents/publications/365-equal-access-nepal2/file#:~:text=About%20 Change%20Starts%20at%20Home%20 (Change)&text=The%20Change%20 intervention%20was%20designed,activities%20 at%20the%20community%20level.

Involving faith-based and religious leaders

The What Works programme, Engaging with Faith Groups to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls in Conflict-affected Communities, also known as "Transforming Masculinities" was implemented in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and engaged traditional and religious leaders in 15 conflict-affected villages in Ituri province.[193] Along with mobilising "Gender Champions" and "Community Action Teams", the programme trained male and female Christian and Muslim leaders on gender over five sessions of two to three days each through a faith-based curriculum that included scriptural reflections, faith references and language adapted to tailor relevant concepts to people's local contexts. Leaders were then tasked to promote learned gender-equality messages and non-violence through holding sermons, addressing youth groups, providing counselling, etc. Results of rigorous evaluation showed substantial reduction of over 50 per cent in physical and sexual IPV (from 69 per cent at baseline to

29 per cent by endline) as well as reduction in non-partner sexual violence (NPSV), which was reduced more than five-fold (from 24 per cent at baseline to 4 per cent at endline). In addition to behaviour change, norms changed wherein beliefs justifying wife-beating dropped from 53% to 38% and men's belief in entitlement to sex also was reduced significantly (from 80% to 55%)[194]. Moreover, 'survivors' internal stigma reduced, as did external stigmatizing attitudes (e.g., by endline, survivors were more willing to seek help and less likely to feel guilty about the violence they experienced).

Manual for Gender Champions and faith leaders is available at: https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/tools-and-guides/transforming-masculinities

Creative evaluations

CARE's Tipping Point Phase 1 piloted multiple approaches to measure social norms change, including CARE's Social Norms Analysis

Plot (SNAP) framework, which formed the basis upon which social norms shifts were measured and understood. These were complemented with evaluation tools, namely focus group discussions (FGDs), Photovoice, and SenseMaker®. The framework defines components of social norms upon which tools are built, allowing the evaluator to assess the strength of a particular norm and ways it may have shifted over time. The first three components of the SNAP framework are drawn directly from social norms theory and describe the nature of the norm in each context: Empirical Expectations (what I think others do), Normative Expectations (what I think others expect me to do), and Sanctions (anticipated opinions or reactions from others). The other two components of the SNAP framework further characterise the strength of the norm in question in its current state: Sensitivity to Sanctions (how social sanctions influence behaviour) and Exceptions (under what circumstances it is considered acceptable to deviate from the norm). See Figure 5.

Figure 5 CARE SNAP Framework

EMPIRICAL EXPECTATIONS	What I think others do.
NORMATIVE EXPECTATIONS	What I think others expect me to do.
EXCEPTIONS	Under what situations is it acceptable to break the norms.
SANCTIONS	Anticipated reactions of others whose opinions matter to me.
SENSITIVITY TO SANCTIONS	How much sanctions matter to me.

More CARE Tools for Social Norms Measurement are available at: https://caretippingpoint.org/tools/

STORMING THE NORMS   49

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

PROPOSED INDICATORS TO MEASURE SHIFTS IN GENDER AND SOCIAL NORMS PERPETUATING CEFM IN ASIA-PACIFIC

Shifts in norms can be quantitatively measured through before-and-after evaluative studies as well as through evaluations involving comparison between control and intervention groups[2] (i.e., experimental designs such as randomised controlled trials). Nonetheless, qualitative measurement, although less common for measuring social and gender norm change, would be useful to understand the institutional aspects, related power relations, or how gender norms affect people's lives, and how they shift over time.[195] In Table 2 are some key indicators that are measures of social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM, along with indicators of gender equality.

EMPIRICAL EXPECTATIONS (OR DESCRIPTIVE NORMS) AND NORMATIVE EXPECTATIONS (OR INJUNCTIVE NORMS)

Percentage of population who believe others do_____ / expect _____to do_____:

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[2] Co-design is rooted in participatory design techniques developed in Scandinavia in the 1970s, and the principle of co-design has the following key components: Intentionally involving target users in designing the process; Postponing design decisions until after gathering feedback; Synthesizing feedback from target users into insights; Developing approach and tools based on feedback.

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

Table 2 Key indicators to measure social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM

Parents	Girls/Boys
(parents) Marry off their daughters before the age of 15 or 18	(girls/boys) Marry before the age of 15 or 18
(parents) Refrain from investing in daughters' education because they are only meant to be good wives and mothers	(girls/boys) Complete education
(parents) Disregard their daughters' views and aspirations, prohibit girls' participation or involvement in decision-making about her life	(girls/boys) Voice opinions and aspirations to delay marriage to parents
(parents) Limit the mobility of their adolescent daughters	(girls/boys) Engage in activities not typically associated with their sex (e.g., biking for girls, cooking for boys)
(parents) Prohibit any discussion about sex or sexuality	(girls/boys) Discuss sex and sexuality issues openly to seek accurate SRHR information
(parents) Prohibit daughters from talking with any boys her age	
(parents) Advise daughters to tolerate violence from husbands and mother-in-laws	(girls/boys) Practice health-seeking behaviours and healthy sexual behaviours
(fathers) Can talk openly to daughters about issues concerning her health, menstruation, etc.	(boys) Help sisters/mothers at home
(husbands) Helping with chores in the house and child rearing	
(husbands) Decide household and family matters jointly with their wives	(boys) Exhibit toxic masculinities such as engaging in sexual harassment of girls in public spaces/school
(husbands) Demand sex from their wives as an entitlement, even through violence	
(husbands) Discipline wivse through violence	

STRENGTH/SEVERITY OF A NORM

Percentage of population who state that many of the people whose opinion matters most to them hold the expectations or belief that _____ (See Activity 5 in the practical tool presented in section E. of this report for specific examples)

Percentage of population who do not hold the same social expectations as the majority, and who share common demographic characteristics (e.g., younger mother-in-law's do not restrict daughter-in-laws movement; younger fathers helping with child rearing, etc.)

Percentage of population who state there are ___ exceptions to following the norm

PLURALISTIC IGNORANCE

Pluralistic ignorance exists when the majority of group members privately reject the norm but adhere to it because they think that others expect them to follow the norm.[196] For example, differences in individual attitudes about CEFM and the belief of what is expected behaviour around CEFM shows that there is pluralistic ignorance. This can be measured by measuring misalignment between what one thinks is expected in relation to what the individual believes is the right thing to do (see Activity 5 in the practical tool presented in Section E of this report), as in these two questions:

What is the percentage of the population who do not agree with the expectations of her/his reference group?

What is the percentage of the population willing to take action by speaking out on the issues she/he thinks are wrong?

SOCIAL SANCTIONS

Percentage of girls/boys who believe they will receive or experience social sanctions (e.g., social backlash, exclusion from social circles, humiliation, gossip/rumours, etc.) for:

- not getting married before age 18
- reasoning with parents to delay marriage
- getting pregnant before marriage (girls only)
- marrying someone outside her/his caste/ethnicity/religion
- divorcing an abusive husband
- seeking help for experiencing violence

Percentage of parents who believe they will receive or experience social sanctions for

- not marrying their daughters off before the age of 18 (e.g., family dishonour, tarnished reputation, gossip/rumours, shame, moral reprehension, etc.)
- listening to daughters'/sons' aspiration delay marriage or continue schooling
- having a daughter who gets pregnant before marriage
- having a daughter/son marry someone outside her/his caste/ethnicity/religion
- having a daughter/son divorce
- having a daughter who seeks help for experiencing violence

SENSITIVITY TO SANCTIONS

Percentage of parents/girls/boys who will behave differently from what they believe because of the fear of sanction

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

D. PROGRAMMING NEXT STEPS AND FURTHER AREAS FOR RESEARCH

1 DESIGN PROGRAMMES FROM THE ONSET WITH SOCIAL AND GENDER NORM CHANGE GOALS

The focus on social and gender norm change goes beyond public awareness raising and traditional behaviour change interventions focused on changing individual attitudes and knowledge. Since social norms refer to the rules of behaviour within a group, changing individual attitudes may not necessarily change behaviour because individuals may personally disagree with social norms, but still conform to them due to fear of social backlash or the desire for social belonging.[197] This underlines the importance of designing interventions with social and gender norms already included as prime considerations for designing change strategies. CARE articulated design principles for engaging in social norms change, which were further simplified into five project actions:

1. find and support early adopters

2. map allies and ask for their support

3. open safe space for dialogue

4. use future-oriented positive messages

5. expect bystander action.

As can be seen from the actions, the starting point of the programme design is how group rules of behaviour can be changed by modelling new behaviours and garnering social support. This is a clear difference from conventional behaviour change programming, which typically starts from identifying ways to improve individual knowledge, skills or attitudes. Thus, this also means that the results framework of projects should go beyond measuring individual level changes and should reflect some of the social and gender norm change indicators presented in the previous section. Additionally, Plan International's gender transformative approach should also be used to ensure that programme design of CEFM interventions incorporates the aforementioned six elements that can help accelerate change and tackle the root causes of gender inequality.

2 DRAW LEARNING FROM EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS THAT HAVE MEASURABLY TRANSFORMED SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS

Evidence-based interventions (EBIs), sometimes called model programmes, have been shown to be effective in achieving their intended results through scientific testing, which often implies a rigorous evaluation.[198,199] While there is still a lot we don't know about the effectiveness of social and gender norm change interventions in eliminating CEFM, programme developers and implementers can learn from evaluated programmes from other prevention fields – such as prevention of IPV, unintended pregnancy, and HIV – as these have been shown to achieve measurable results and quantifiable improvements in gender equality and reduction of harmful gendered social norms, particularly of

the injunctive norms (normative expectations). Moreover, adapting already evaluated effective approaches in changing social and gender norms could save time and resources compared to developing new ones from scratch.

Examples such as Transforming Masculinities (in DRC) to effectively engage religious leaders, and Sammanit Jeevan (in Nepal) to address the subordinate position and VAWG faced by younger married women in extended families were discussed previously in greater detail in the Promising Practices section. There are, however, common elements identified in their design and implementation (Table 3).[200]

Table 3 Effective design and implementation elements in VAWG prevention interventions

Design	Rigorously planned, with a robust theory of change, rooted in knowledge of local context;
	Used a gender-power analysis, built and fostered gender equity;
	Emphasized empowerment, critical reflection, and communication and conflict resolution skills building;
	Used age-appropriate design (for those implemented with children) and provided a longer time for learning, including experiential learning and changes in behaviour and ideas, and an engaging pedagogy for children;
	Included gender inequity and social norms on the use of violence as well as building social and emotional skills.
Implementation	Staff in all these interventions were carefully selected, trained well, and supported;
	There was optimal intensity in terms of exposure to the intervention, i.e., the duration and frequency of sessions and overall programme length, to enable time for reflection and experiential learning.

In addition, effective programmatic approaches typically span the ecological framework – from those that primarily focus on working with individual girls and address interpersonal communication and relations, to those that operate at the institutional and policy levels.[201]

3 MAXIMIZE THE USE OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA FOR EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMMING ON SOCIAL AND GENDER NORM CHANGE

In order to bridge the gap between research and practice, there can be guides developed to support programme developers and implementers in using the research findings around CEFM for effective programme design of gender transformative strategies to change harmful social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM. For example, once it is known in a particular country context where the exceptions lie regarding a particular gender norm (e.g., men do not do work around the home, however in some communities younger fathers are starting to help in child rearing), then the programme can be designed to "target the people following these exceptions and use them as 'role models' to expand positive behaviours."[202] Regional and country offices can also integrate capacity development on data use for its staff.

STORMING THE NORMS 55
Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

4   EXPAND SOCIAL AND GENDER NORM CHANGE RELATED INTERVENTIONS TO INCLUDE REINFORCING POSITIVE NORMS

It is important to note that social norms are not all bad and harmful. As previously discussed in Section 3.1.2, social norms can fulfil a range of functions that are deemed useful in communities/societies, and there are some positive social norms that promote the value of women and children. For instance, there are positive norms around 'parents wanting what is best for the child'. Therefore, it is important to consider that positive social and gender norms can also

be used as a positive force for change. This can be done by providing examples of how the positive norm is actually aligned with the change objective, such as delaying marriage can bring about positive benefits to girls' lives that could serve their best interests. Thus, one strategy that can be included as part of ending CEFM involves complementing interventions that aim to transform harmful norms, with interventions that strengthen and reinforce positive ones.

5   CONDUCT FURTHER RESEARCH INCLUDING ON DETERMINING WHAT HAS SUCCESSFULLY CAUSED THE SHIFTS IN SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS
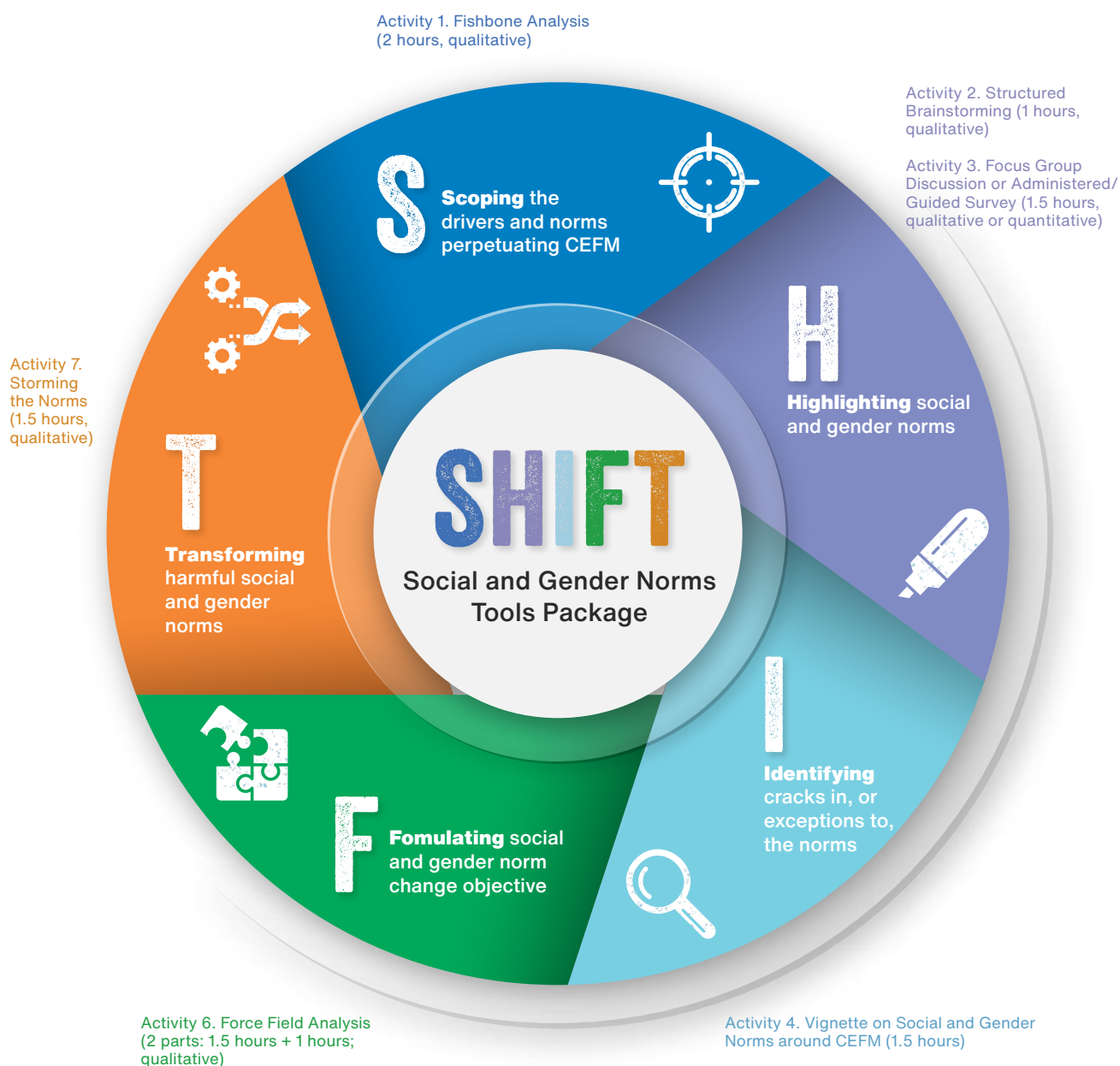
The UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme to End Child Marriage, and Girls Not Brides published a list of research priorities on ending child marriage and supporting married girls in 2015. As a result, studies on child marriage have expanded significantly, and have contributed to understanding the scale, impact, and nature of child marriage.[203] However, there are still identified gaps that could guide future research directions and generate more evidence to advance social and gender norm change work in eliminating CEFM:

- There is a lack of evaluation research that measurably demonstrates which interventions successfully cause shifts in social and gender norms in the context of eliminating CEFM.[204]

- While there is research on causes of the decline of child marriage in many settings (i.e., education, greater women's empowerment), more research is needed on the effect of these programmes on girls' and women's agency.[205]

- There are also huge gaps in knowledge of the impact of social-norm-change activities as the major recent reviews of what works to end child marriage do not significantly include social norms or theories of norms change, focusing instead on programmatic interventions that are easier to measure.[206]

- To determine the relative cost-effectiveness, implementation ability, and scalability of interventions, research could be done to analyse the comparative impact and implementation of single interventions versus comprehensive packages of interventions, as well as to assess the impact of specific approaches targeted at different groups (e.g., girls, boys/men, parents and communities, including religious and community leaders, and policy makers, to delay marriage and support married girls.[207]

- Given that it was not covered in this research, future studies can also have a focus on identifying how social and gender norms perpetuate CEFM in humanitarian settings.

- Lastly, despite best efforts to identify more examples of positive social and gender norms that can be reinforced as part of interventions to eliminate CEFM, more formative research could be helpful to explore positive social and gender norms that could be key entry points for gender transformative programming in order to counter or weaken the harmful ones that perpetuate CEFM.

E. PRACTICAL TOOLS TO ANALYSE AND MEASURE SHIFTS IN SOCIAL NORMS AND GENDER NORMS PERPETUATING CEFM

SCOPING, HIGHLIGHTING, IDENTIFYING, FORMULATING AND TRANSFORMING (SHIFT)
SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS TOOLS PACKAGE

Activity 1. Fishbone Analysis
(2 hours, qualitative)

Activity 2. Structured
Brainstorming (1 hours,
qualitative)

Activity 3. Focus Group
Discussion or Administered/
Guided Survey (1.5 hours,
qualitative or quantitative)

Scoping the
drivers and norms
perpetuating CEFM

Highlighting social
and gender norms

Activity 7.
Storming
the Norms
(1.5 hours,
qualitative)

SHIFT

Social and Gender Norms
Tools Package

Transforming
harmful social
and gender
norms

Identifying
cracks in, or
exceptions to,
the norms

Fomulating social
and gender norm
change objective

Activity 6. Force Field Analysis
(2 parts: 1.5 hours + 1 hours;
qualitative)

Activity 4. Vignette on Social and Gender
Norms around CEFM (1.5 hours)

Activity 5. Survey on Social and Gender
Norms and Attitudes on CEFM and Gender
Equality (1 hour, quantitative)

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

A   ABOUT THIS TOOLS PACKAGE

WHAT IS THIS TOOLS PACKAGE FOR?

This tools package was part of this research study and was conducted by ResultsinHealth for Plan International APAC. The SHIFT Social and Gender Norms Tools Package contains a combination of newly developed tools along with existing tools that have been adapted[3] to align with Plan International APAC's priorities and programming around CEFM in South and South East Asia. These tools can be used to gather and analyse quantitative data and qualitative information on social norms and gender norms perpetuating CEFM. They include methods, activities and guidance to:

1) measure people's beliefs about social expectations regarding typical and appropriate behaviour for girls and boys and women and men; and

2) understand more deeply the sanctions for not conforming to social and gender norms, and other reasons why particular social and gender norms are kept in place and amplified through institutions and gendered power relations.

WHEN TO USE THIS TOOLS PACKAGE?

This practical package can be used for analysing and for measuring shifts in social and gender norms by conducting the activities as part of formative or baseline research to inform programme design, routine project monitoring, and at the end of a programmatic implementation of a set of targeted social and gender norm change interventions. Thus, these analytical and measurement tools can be used during the various stages of Plan International APAC's project cycle: *Designing and preparing, Implementing strategic interventions, and Reviewing and reporting.*[208] Therefore, the tools' activities and guide questions can be integrated into a larger baseline data gathering exercise or formative research, on-going monitoring activities, and an end-of-project or impact evaluation effort. Some activities are more appropriate for a specific stage than others, and this will be indicated where relevant. While these activities and guide questions can serve as a useful starting point in conducting primary data gathering for analytical and measurement exercises, it is also important to do a literature review to establish a good sense of the drivers as well as the social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM based on available country-specific research.

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[3] References are included for adapted tools and acknowledgment is given to the work of various organizations and programmes around social norms and gender norms, such as those of: CARE, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Oxfam, Overseas Development Institute, and the Institute for Reproductive Health- Georgetown University. Finally, this work builds on Plan International's AoGD SRHR work and Plan International APAC'S 'Time to Act! Gender-Transformative Programme Strategies for Addressing Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Unions in Asia-Pacific- Toolkit for Practitioners'.

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

WHO IS THIS TOOLS PACKAGE FOR?

This tools package is primarily intended for Plan International staff and partners designing, implementing, and reviewing interventions addressing CEFM in the Asia Pacific region. It can, however, also serve as a guide for practitioners in the field of eliminating CEFM or those working on other social and behaviour change initiatives, with a focus on social and gender norm change strategies in Asia Pacific region or globally. Additionally, given the attention to include participatory methodologies and activities that can be conducted at the community level, youth activists working to end CEFM in their communities may also find this tools package useful.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLS PACKAGE?

Each activity in this tools package can be conducted as a single data gathering exercise of approximately 1.5 to two hours long.

The activities can be done across several sessions depending on project schedules and participant availability, or, alternatively, they can be conducted as part of a 1.5 to two-day consultative workshop. All the activities featured in this package should ideally be conducted, since they collectively provide a clear picture of social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM. However, country offices and practitioners may select the most relevant activities to prioritise based on available time and resources, or to address the most critical information gaps in various countries and specific contexts.

While this package was based on an extensive desk review of research on CEFM in South and South East Asia, the activities and guide questions in this package can further be tailored to country contexts based on available and updated national information and data. Additionally, consultations with stakeholders, local partners and other practitioners addressing CEFM in the country can ensure the activities are relevant, context responsive and culturally sensitive.

B KEY QUESTIONS AND ELEMENTS OF THE SHIFT SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS TOOL

The SHIFT Tools Package aims to support programme, research and evaluation teams to answer seven critical questions analysing existing social and gender norms in a community or group and measure their shifts.

1) What are the social norms and gender norms that influence CEFM the most?

2) Why do people comply with social norms?

3) Who are the gatekeepers/powerholders that reinforce social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM?

4) How are the social and gender norms reproduced and amplified through institutions and power dynamics in social interactions?

5) How severe or weak are the sanctions perceived to be for disobeying the norms?

6) Are there 'allowable' and/or 'acceptable' exceptions to the social and gender norms?

7) Is there misalignment between personal attitudes of intended project community members and what they believe are the social expectations in their community/group?

The main elements and activities for analysing social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM in the SHIFT Tools Package are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Main elements and activities of SHIFT Tools Package

	Element	Activities	Time & Method
S	Scoping the drivers and norms perpetuating CEFM	Activity 1. Fishbone Analysis	2 hours, qualitative
H	Highlighting social and gender norms	Activity 2. Structured Brainstorming	1 hour, qualitative
		Activity 3. Focus Group Discussion or Administered/Guided Survey	1.5 hours, qualitative or quantitative
I	Identifying cracks in, or exceptions to, the norms	Activity 4: Vignette on social and gender norms around CEFM — What would most people do? What would people be expected to do?	1.5 hours
		Activity 5. Survey on Social and Gender Norms and Attitudes on CEFM and Gender Equality	1 hour, quantitative
F	Formulating social and gender norm change objectives	Activity 6. Force Field Analysis	2 parts: 1.5 hours + 1 hour; qualitative
T	Transforming harmful social and gender norms	Activity 7. Storming the Norms: Determining the entry points and barriers to transforming harmful and negative social and gender norms, while strengthening the positive ones	1.5 hours, qualitative

KEY TERMS

Social norms are what individuals believe others in their reference group (i.e., the group they identify themselves to be a part of) think and do. It is also what people believe is typical ('normal') behaviour or what other's expectations are about what is appropriate behaviour. Therefore, social norms influence one's behaviour either because 'other people do it' or 'because other people expect me to do it'.[209]

Two types:

Descriptive norms (also called empirical expectations) – this is a shared belief in a group or community about what other people normally. For example: Parents marry of their daughters before age 18 because of the belief that "most girls here are already married by the time they are 18".

Injunctive norms (also called normative expectations) – this is a shared belief in a group believe about what is appropriate to do or what is expected of them by others in the community to do. For example: A girl is expected to marry before age 18 regardless of whether the parents or the daughter prefer to wait.

Gender norms are a sub-set of social norms and are "social norms defining acceptable and appropriate actions for women and men in a given group or society". Gender norms are embedded in, and reproduced through institutions and social interactions, and are enforced by powerholders who benefit from people's compliance with them.[210]

Personal attitudes are what individuals think about a behaviour, outside of a social context. For example, "I think girls who get pregnant are shameful and should get married immediately to save the family honour."

C ACTIVITIES AND GUIDE

S Scoping the drivers and norms perpetuating CEFM

ACTIVITY 1. Fishbone Analysis[211]

2 hours

☑ Qualitative

☐ Quantitative

A fishbone or Ishikawa diagram is a visualization tool for root cause analysis, combining the practice of brainstorming with a type of mind map template.

OBJECTIVE: To brainstorm on general ideas and knowledge on drivers and on social and gender norms that perpetuate CEFM, and to categorising them. This should ideally be conducted at the design and preparatory stage of the project cycle.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- List the main drivers and social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM.

- Discuss the overarching drivers and social and gender norms, and categorise them according to **political**, **economic**, **social** or **legal** (see Figure 6 for an example).

- For each driver or norm, ask further: what is its cause? Then list the cause in the diagram, branching out from the relevant driver or norm. For example, an identified driver given for CEFM might start out to be very general such as 'poverty', an economic factor. Asking why this is a driver of CEFM might lead to other causes: younger girls require less dowry; marrying off daughters is one less mouth to feed. Another possible answer could be lack of education and other causes to that could be: girls should not work or finish higher education anyway, girls are not allowed to go to further studies because it is far from their house/community, etc.
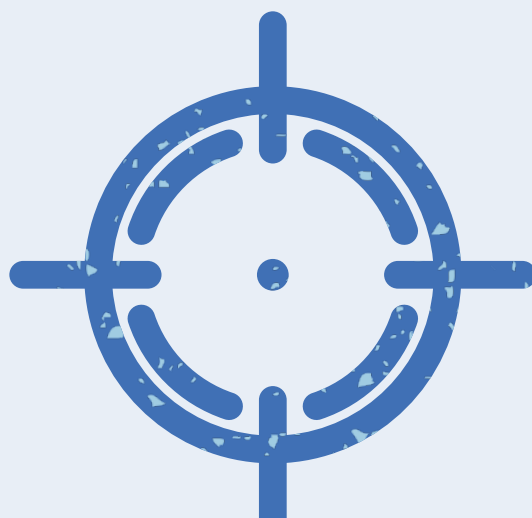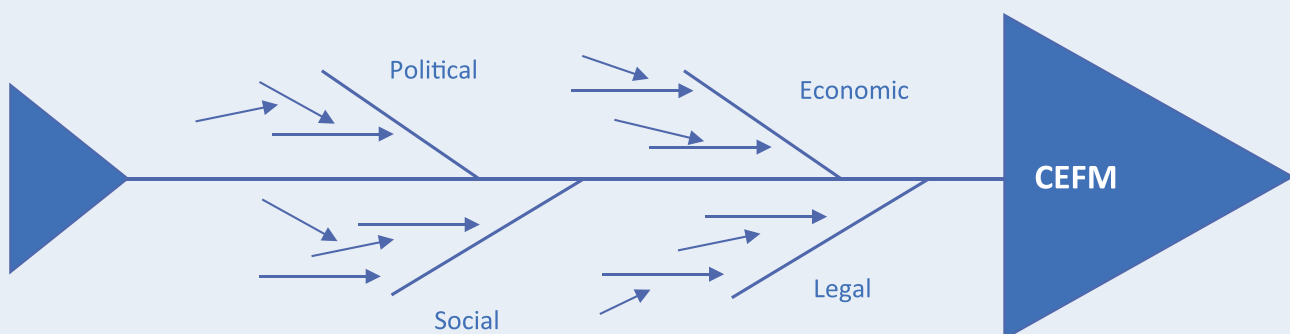
- Ask probing questions to draw out social norms and gender norms, such as:

  1) Are there social expectations of what is normal and appropriate behaviour reinforcing CEFM (or impacting one of the causes identified in the diagram)?

  2) Are there prescribed behaviours and actions for girls and women because they are girls/women?

  3) Are there prescribed behaviours and actions for boys and men because they are boys/men?

- Continue the process breaking down each cause until the root causes of the problem have been identified.

METHODS AND TIPS:

- This activity can be conducted in small groups or in plenary, depending on the number of participants.

- The groups can be given flipcharts to draw their fishbone diagrams and list the drivers and norms they discuss. If facilitated in plenary, participants can be asked to give individual answers on drivers or norms perpetuating CEFM, which the facilitator can then write on a flipchart with a fishbone diagram in front of the workshop room. Facilitators should record participants' answers as succinct phrases, rather than as single words or lengthy statements (e.g., younger girls require less dowry instead of just writing 'dowry').

Figure 6 Example of a fishbone diagram

Source: Adapted from Belen, 2019

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

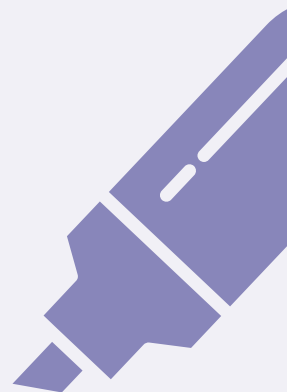# **H** Highlighting social and gender norms

ACTIVITY 2. Structured Brainstorming

1 hour

☑ Qualitative

☐ Quantitative

OBJECTIVE: To focus analysis of drivers to identify social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM and gain deeper understanding of the reasons people conform. This should ideally be conducted at the Design and Preparatory stage of the project cycle.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Review and discuss the results of the fishbone analysis previously conducted. Identify and circle the social and gender norms.

  *Recall that social norms are unwritten and informal rules that prescribe behaviour, which are guided by shared beliefs about what is typical and appropriate behaviour. In other words:

what people think others do, or what they think others expect them to do. Gender norms are a sub-set of social norms and are "social norms defining acceptable and appropriate actions for women and men".

- List these social norms and gender norms in the first column of Table 5.

Facilitate a discussion using the key questions from the rest of the column headers in Table 5.

METHODS AND TIPS:

- Conduct this activity as part of formative or baseline research.
- This activity is best conducted in small groups.

Table 5 Template and key questions for Structured Brainstorming

What is the social norm? What is the gender norm?	Why do people conform to this norm? (e.g., do they gain benefits or fear sanctions for behaving against a norm?)	Who are the gatekeepers and power holders that reinforce this social and gender norm perpetuating CEFM?	How are these social and gender norms reproduced and amplified through institutions and gendered power dynamics in social interactions?
Example: **Adolescent girls who get pregnant must be married off quickly**	The grave shame to the family name of a daughter who gets pregnant outside marriage	Parents, in-laws, traditional and religious leaders, school administrators	• Some child marriage laws have an exception for girls who get pregnant • Some schools force pregnant girls to drop-out of school while there are no consequences for the boys

Source: Author's own; Belen, 2022

ACTIVITY 3. Focus Group Discussion or Administered/Guided Survey

1.5 hours

☑ Qualitative
☑ Quantitative

OBJECTIVE: To gather more in-depth qualitative information on how extensive the shared beliefs are regarding what is typical and appropriate behaviours surrounding the practice of CEFM, and to monitor beginnings of shifts in the social and gender norms. Additionally, this focus group discussion (FDG) aims to gather information on some indication of the strength of the norm: whether sanctions are severe or mild; and the sensitivity to sanctions (i.e., how strong their influence is on people conforming or not). This can be done through quantitative and qualitative methods and can be conducted at the Design and Prepare stage, as part of routine monitoring in the Implementation stage, or the Review and Report stage in the project cycle.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Facilitate an FGD or conduct a rapid survey with the project's intended participants or community members, using the main questions in Table 6.

- A series of FGDs can be conducted, having separate discussions for women and men, and for girls and boys.

- The specific norms measured in the survey can be tailored based on the information gathered from the scoping study or formative research in the specific country.

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

Table 6 Key questions for Focus Group Discussion or Administered/Guided Survey

FGD Questions[212]	Information being gathered to understand social and gender norms	Survey Questions To what degree do you agree or disagree with the following statements: (1) – Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Disagree; or (4) Strongly Disagree
• How common is child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) in your community? Probe: Is it becoming more or less common? Why do you say so?	Descriptive Social Norm or Empirical Expectation	1a. It is common for girls to get married in our community before age 18. 1b. It is common for girls to get married in our community before the age of 15. 1c. Girls typically get married before age 18 because they are forced by their parents. 1d. Girls typically get married before age 18 because they get pregnant.
• Do people approve or disapprove of CEFM in your community? Probe: Has this changed over time? What are some examples?	Injunctive Norm or Normative Expectation	2a. People in our community expect girls to get married before age 18. 2b. The expectation for girls to get married before age 18 is becoming less common in our community.
• What are the perceived benefits of child marriage? Probe: Do the benefits still outweigh the negative consequences and impact of CEFM or are they starting to be perceived as less beneficial?	Views on drivers of CEFM	3a. Child marriage benefits families economically. 3b. Child marriage benefits families socially by protecting the family honour and reputation.
• What are the perceived disadvantages of child marriage? Probe: Are these disadvantages increasingly preventing some families from practicing CEFM? Please give examples.	Views on impact of CEFM	4a. Child marriage is severely harmful to girls' well-being. 4b. Child marriage is harmful to families and communities.
• If a family allowed their daughter to delay marriage until after she was 18, what negative effects will the family face? Please give examples. Probe: Are these sanctions still perceived to be as severe or are the negative consequences for not conforming becoming less so?	Sanctions for not conforming with the norm	5a. Delaying a daughter's marriage damages a family's reputation with the community. 5b. Delaying a daughter's marriage is against religious doctrine or it is a sin.
• If the community criticised a family who decided to delay their daughter's marriage (who is below 18 years of age), would this make them change their mind and push through with marrying her off? Probe: Are these sanctions becoming less effective in ensuring everyone conforms? Are there examples of positive norms that are starting to be more rampant in the community regarding preventing CEFM?	Sensitivity to the sanction	6a. The threat to the family honour often pushes families to marry off their daughter even if the parents did not agree with child marriage. 6b. Parents who do not want to marry off their daughter before age 18 are becoming less worried about the threat to the family honour because these days they think a girl's education is more important.

Source: FGD questions are adapted from Plan International, Using Qualitative Methods in Results Monitoring of Social Norms; Survey Questions are author's own; Belen, 2022

METHODS AND TIPS:

- FGDs should ideally not have more than eight participants, and it is useful to have a facilitator and designated documenter.

- Note that the FGD is not intended for gathering data on specific persons/families or on the participants' own experiences; only of their perceptions or knowledge of issues and incidences in their communities/groups that they may have heard of. Thus, do not solicit personal experiences unless the participants volunteer them. Further, when conducting FGDs with children, ensure that facilitators are briefed/trained on ethical research guidelines involving children, especially as the topic involves risks for re-traumatization. See available resources:

  o Plan International Framework for Ethical Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MER)

  o UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis

  o Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC)

  o WHO and RTI Ethical and safety recommendations for intervention research on violence against women

- If conducting a survey, responses can be disaggregated and analysed according to sex, age, education level, socio-economic status, urban/rural split, or other demographic characteristics.

- Repeat the data gathering periodically to use a routine monitoring tool to see how the strength or influence of the norms change over the duration of the project.

Identifying cracks in, or exceptions to, the norms

ACTIVITY 4. Vignette on social and gender norms around CEFM[213] — What would most people do? What would people be expected to do?

⏱ 1.5 hours

☑ Qualitative
☐ Quantitative

OBJECTIVE: To identify social and gender norms that are weak or beginning to weaken over time, as well as to identify exceptions to break a norm (i.e. you are allowed to disobey a norm for few or many reasons). Cracks and exceptions to norms are evidence that the social or gender norm is beginning to or can shift, and therefore, could represent an important entry point for social and gender norm change work for a project to prioritise.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Facilitate a discussion (this may be through interviews or focus group discussions) using the following vignette.

I will tell you a story of a mother called Fatma, a father called Amer and their daughter Sitti, who is 14 years old. Fatma, Amer and Sitti live in a community like you. They live in a village in Maguindanao where a bombing just took place recently. One day, Sophia, Fatma's cousin, comes over to visit the family. Sophia announces that her daughter, Sarah, who is also 14, is engaged and getting married in a month's time. Sophia says that she believes that Fatma's daughter, Sitti, should also get married as she is becoming a woman and should have children soon. Sophia reveals that she also knows a family from her village that is interested in marrying their son to Sitti.

- Ask the following questions and ensure participation of all respondents if conducting in a group.

a. On descriptive and injunctive norms surrounding early marriage

- o What would most parents like Fatma and Amer do in this situation? What would Sitti do?

- o What would people in the community expect Fatma and Amer to do in this situation? What would they expect Sitti to do?

- o Why would they expect this? Are any of these reasons related to how girls and women are expected to be a 'good' woman/wife/mother/daughter?

- o How is this different for boys who are expected to get married?

b. On exceptions and factors that reinforce or weaken social norms

- o Are there exceptions or circumstances wherein it would be considered more acceptable for Sitti not to get married at her age (e.g., age, social status, wealth, location, ethnicity)?

- o Are there some groups or people in the community who would not expect Sitti to get married?

68 **STORMING THE NORMS**
Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

- Continue the story (introduce a twist):

> But Fatma and Amer don't want Sitti to marry and have children at this age. Sitti has told them that she wants to finish secondary school and find paid work before getting married. Fatma and Amer announce to the visitors that they do not want Sitti to marry at this age.

a. Descriptive and injunctive norms surrounding early marriage:

- o What would people in the community think of parents who reacted like this? What would they think of Sitti for not wanting to marry? What would they think of her for wanting to do paid work before getting married? Are there people who would have a different opinion from the majority?

- o How would people around Fatma, Amer and Sitti react towards the decision (specifically peers, fathers, mothers, uncles, extended family, family of the groom, neighbours, elders, community leaders, or religious leaders)? What would they say about the family?

b. Rewards and sanctions:

- o What other kind of behaviour or negative consequences might Fatma, Amer and Sitti experience as a result? Would there be any benefits?

- o Would this be different for boys? Why?

- o Do other factors make a difference (e.g., age, social status, wealth, location, ethnicity)?

c. Possible cracks in norms or entry points:

- o Can you think of parents like Fatma and Amer who resisted community pressure to have their children married at an early age?

- o What factors made this possible for them to choose not to conform? What factors have contributed to this shift?

- o What positive norms can be observed in your community that can be strengthened in the efforts to eliminate CEFM?

- Be sure to document all responses and consolidate the information to highlight the key exceptions that allow for not conforming with or not perpetuating CEFM.

METHODS AND TIPS:

- This activity can be conducted as a focus group discussion or as part of an interview.
- Repeat the exercise periodically to use a routine monitoring tool to see how the strength or influence of the norms change over the duration of the project, and if new cracks or exceptions emerge.

ACTIVITY 5. Survey on Social and Gender Norms and Attitudes on CEFM and Gender Equality[4]

⏱ 1 hours

☐ Qualitative
☑ Quantitative

OBJECTIVE: To gather quantitative information on the extent to which there is broad agreement on beliefs about what others approve of or expect people in their community to do. The survey also gathers information on misalignment between these social and gender norms on expected behaviour, and personal attitudes on CEFM and gender equality (also termed as pluralistic ignorance), as well as an individual's readiness to take action to correct a harmful norm. This is primarily a quantitative method, which can be most useful to conduct as a baseline survey at the Design and Prepare stage, and as an endline survey during the Review and Report stage in the project cycle.

INSTRUCTIONS:

☐ Conduct a rapid survey with the project's intended participants or community members, using the main questions below.

☐ The social and gender norms around expected behaviour and beliefs on CEFM and gender equality can be tailored based on information gathered from previous FGDs or desk review of available research in the country.

SURVEY QUESTIONS:

How many of the people whose opinion matters most to you hold the following expectations on what is typical and appropriate behaviour:

Response Scale: 1 – None of them, 2 – A few of them, 3 – About half of them, 4 – Most of them, and 5 – All of them

☐ Expect a girl to marry before age 18 years

☐ Expect a boy to marry before age 18 years

☐ Expect parents to restrict mobility of girls to be safe from sexual harassment or violence

☐ Expect parents to restrict mobility of boys to be safe from sexual harassment or violence

☐ Expect girls to complete tertiary education

☐ Expect boys to complete tertiary education

☐ Expect girls to be virgins before marriage

☐ Expect boys to be a virgins before marriage

☐ Fathers should be the main decision-maker regarding the marriage of their daughters

☐ Girls should be listened to regarding their wishes to complete their education and delay marriage

☐ Boys should be listened to regarding their wishes to complete their education and delay marriage

☐ Adolescents in an intimate relationship with someone they love should not use contraception when having sex to prove their fidelity

☐ An adolescent girl who gets pregnant with her intimate partner should be married immediately

☐ An adolescent girl who gets pregnant as a result of sexual violence should be married immediately

☐ Married girls should not be allowed to work outside the home

☐ Married adolescent girls should bear a child within the first year of their marriage

☐ Married girls should obey their husbands

☐ Married boys should restrict the mobility of their wives

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[4] This is based on research and an evidence-based survey developed by social norm and prevention experts. Adapted from Perrin et al. (2019). Social norms and beliefs about gender-based violence scale: a measure for use with gender-based violence prevention programmes in low-resource and humanitarian settings. Conflict and Health 13 (1)N. Glass and others, 'Evaluating the Communities Care Program: Best Practice for Rigorous Research to Evaluate Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response Programs in Humanitarian Settings', Conflict and Health, 12.1 (2018), 1–10 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-018-0138-0>.

- ☐ Married boys should not help with household chores or child-rearing responsibilities
- ☐ Married boys are justified in hitting their wives if they do one or more of these things: (1) leave the house without permission, (2) fail to do household chores or fail to meet child-rearing responsibilities well, (3) refuse to have sex with them, or (4) talk to another man.

Do you think any of the following statements are WRONG and should be changed in your community? How ready or willing are you to take action by speaking out on the issues you think are wrong?

Response scale: 1 – Agree with this statement, 2 – I am not sure if I agree or disagree with this statement, 3 – I disagree with the statement but am not ready to tell others, and 4 – I disagree with the statement and I am telling others that this is wrong.

- ☐ A girl should marry before age 18 years
- ☐ A boy should marry before age 18 years
- ☐ Parents should restrict mobility of girls to be safe from sexual harassment or violence
- ☐ Parents should restrict mobility of boys to be safe from sexual harassment or violence
- ☐ Girls should complete tertiary education
- ☐ Boys should complete tertiary education
- ☐ Girls should be virgins before marriage
- ☐ Boys should be virgins before marriage
- ☐ Fathers should be the main decision-maker regarding the marriage of their daughters
- ☐ Girls should be listened to regarding their wishes to complete their education and delay marriage

- ☐ Boys should be listened to regarding their wishes to complete their education and delay marriage
- ☐ Adolescents in an intimate relationship with someone they love should not use contraception when having sex to prove their fidelity
- ☐ An adolescent girl who gets pregnant with her intimate partner should be married immediately
- ☐ An adolescent girl who gets pregnant as a result of sexual violence should be married immediately
- ☐ Married girls should not be allowed to work outside the home
- ☐ Married adolescent girls should bear a child within the first year of their marriage
- ☐ Married girls should obey their husbands
- ☐ Married boys should restrict the mobility of their wives
- ☐ Married boys should not help with household chores or child-rearing responsibilities
- ☐ Married boys are justified to hit their wives if they do one or more of these things: (1) leave the house without permission, (2) fail to do her household chores or child-rearing responsibilities well, (3) refuse to have sex with them, or (4) talk to another man.

METHODS AND TIPS:

- In analysing the survey, responses can be disaggregated and analysed according to sex, age, education level, socio-economic status, urban/rural split, or other demographic characteristics.
- Administer this survey at the beginning and at the end of the project to see changes in the misalignment of personal attitudes with social norms after the implementation of the project.

F **Fomulating** social and gender norm change objective
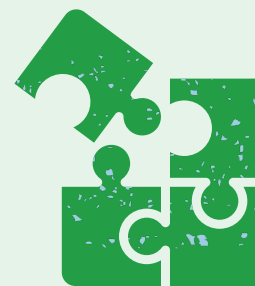
ACTIVITY 6. Force Field Analysis[214]

Part 1 1.5 hours **Part 2** 1 hour ☑ Qualitative ☐ Quantitative

A Force Field Analysis is a brainstorming tool for identifying root causes and is based on the assumption that there are always opposing forces (that need to be countered) and favourable forces (that need to be increased) in order to facilitate a change.

OBJECTIVE: Identify positive and negative social norms and gender norms and prioritize them based on the relative strength and influence of their force, to formulate the change objectives for the social and gender norm change efforts.

INSTRUCTIONS:

PART 1 (1.5 hours)

- Make two lists: the positive social and gender norms that promote the elimination of CEFM (these are forces FOR), and the harmful and negative social and gender norms that hinder the efforts to eliminate CEFM (these are forces AGAINST).

- Discuss the social and gender norms, and assess the strength and influence of each.

- Place the norms in a Force Field diagram, and draw/adjust the length of each arrow in the diagram based on the strength or influence the force represents (see Figure 7 for an example)

- Discuss each positive and negative norm or force as a group. Make sure to review that each one is a social or gender norm, not a value or attitude.

  *Recall that **social norms** are unwritten and informal rules that prescribe behaviour, which are guided by shared beliefs about what is typical and appropriate behaviour. In other words: what people think others do, or what they think others expect them to do. And **gender norms** are a sub-set of social norms and are "social norms defining acceptable and appropriate actions for women and men".

Figure 7 Example of Force Field Analysis results: Forces for and against eliminating CEFM
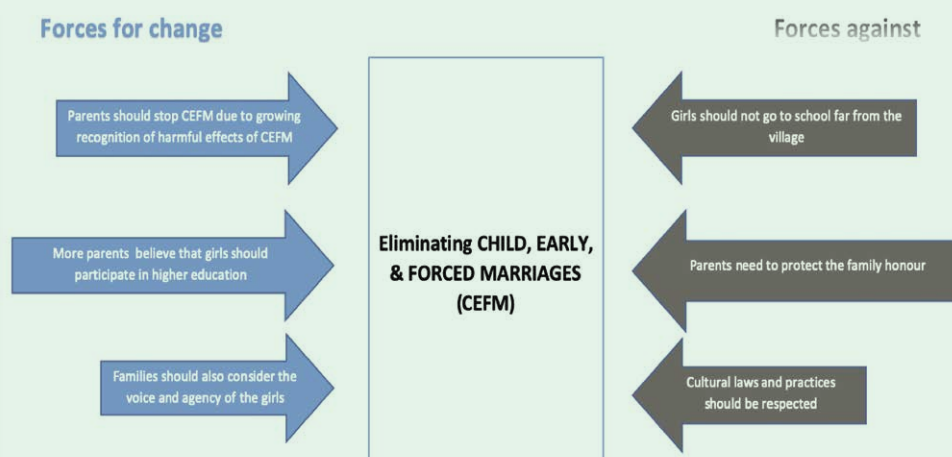
Source: Author's own; Belen, 2022

PART 2 (1 hour)

- Review the outcome of the Force Field Analysis. For each force, especially for the stronger ones, discuss how to further strengthen the positive norms/forces for change and reduce the negative norms/forces against it.

- Discuss who should be engaged and through what through what actions, audiences and aspirations (the 3As).

- Then jointly formulate the appropriate change objectives using the following format of determining the **3As**. You can review the results of Activity 2 to identify the target audience based on who the identified gatekeepers are.

METHODS AND TIPS:

- This activity is versatile and can be conducted in pairs, small groups, or in plenary, depending on the number of participants and available materials.

- The participants can be given flipcharts to list their forces on in their groups, or a worksheet can be printed out for pair work. If being facilitated in plenary, participants can be given two cut-out arrows each and asked to list one positive and one negative force affecting the elimination of CEFM, which they can then place on a flipchart in front of the workshop room.

- Repeat the exercise periodically to use a routine monitoring tool to see how the strength or influence of the norms change over the duration of the project.

Table 7 Using action, audience and aspiration (3As) to formulate social and gender norm change objectives

Social and gender norm change objectives	We aim to...
ACTION (i.e., discuss, train, negotiate, empower, etc.)	Example: Have a series of courtyard discussions about gender equality, the harmful effects of CEFM, preventing GBV, and girls' and boys' rights...
AUDIENCE (i.e., parents, girls, boys, teachers, religious leaders, etc.)	This should include with mothers and fathers, separately and jointly
ASPIRATION (i.e., to respect girls' voice and choice, to strengthen one's advocacy capacities, to support girls' empowerment, etc.)	To - support harmonious family relationships free from violence - strengthen support for delaying marriage of their daughters and sons - understand the family's constraints and inform programming strategies to address drivers to CEFM.

Source: Author's own; Belen, 2022

T Transforming harmful social and gender norms
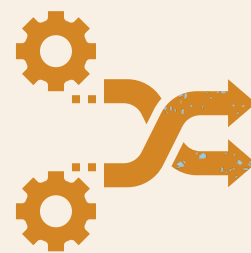
ACTIVITY 7. Storming the Norms: Determining the entry points and barriers to transforming harmful and negative social and gender norms, while strengthening the positive ones.

⏱ 1.5 hours   ☑ Qualitative   ☐ Quantitative

OBJECTIVE: To identify opportunities and challenges for the implementation of gender transformative interventions to change social and gender norms.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Facilitate a discussion on a selection of gender transformative interventions to change social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM.

2. Ask participants to identify opportunities that could be maximized or built upon in the implementation of the interventions. When considering opportunities, ask participants to reflect on existing community assets and grassroots mechanisms that can be levers, as well as positive community norms and practices that can be used as a jump off point. (You can review norms that were identified in the Force Field Analysis exercise.)

3. Then ask participants to list challenges that could be faced in the implementation of the interventions. Fill in Table 8, either in plenary or in small groups.

4. Lastly, discuss any additional gender transformative interventions that they may know of or recommend.

METHODS AND TIPS:

- Before conducting this activity, facilitators can review the promising practices in Chapter 6 of this research report.

- The participants can be given flipcharts to list their responses on in their groups. If being facilitated in plenary, participants can be given sticky notes, which they can then place on a flipchart in front of the workshop room.

Table 8 Template for identifying opportunities and challenges to implement Gender Transformative Interventions for Social and Gender Norm Change

OPPORTUNITIES →	GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR SOCIAL AND GENDER NORM CHANGE	← CHALLENGES
	(1) Youth activism (i.e., supporting collectivisation of youth and amplifying their voice and agency)	
	(2) Social empowerment of women and girls (i.e., adolescent girls clubs, adolescent mentoring, SRHR and CSE, prevention of unintended pregnancy, etc.)	
	(3) Economic empowerment of women and girls coupled with gender transformative education (i.e., skills training, livelihoods interventions, microfinance together with education on gender, human rights, CEFM prevention, etc.)	
	(4) Relational and family interventions (i.e., parenting programmes, couples- and family-based interventions)	
	(5) Community mobilisation (i.e., forming committees, prevention groups, task forces at community level) and supporting them with extensive gender and CEFM education, along with wider awareness-raising and public education on CEFM	
	(6) Engagement of traditional, religious and faith leaders	
	(7) Support for better implementation of laws, local governance and gender-responsive service provision	
	Others?	

Source: Author's own; Belen, 2022

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND GUIDE QUESTIONS

Key Research Questions

1) What are the key social and gender norms that perpetuate CEFM across the Asia Pacific region?

1.1) Specify negative social norms causing and perpetuating CEFM and their root-causes

1.2) Specify negative gender norms causing and perpetuating CEFM and their root-causes

1.3) Where do negative social and gender norms intersect and how does this interplay further aggravate the incidence and perpetuation of CEFM in Asia-Pacific region?

1.4) To what extent, and how do these social and gender norms further affect and aggravate the situation of married girls in the Asia Pacific region?

1.5) To what extent is CEFM perceived as a protective mechanism for girls and young women?

2) What are the formal and informal power structures and systems that persist due to the deeply entrenched negative social and gender norms that further exacerbate CEFM in Asia Pacific region?

2.1) Who are the key power-holders and decision-makers perpetuating CEFM??

2.2) How are the identified social and gender norms that perpetuate CEFM perceived and amplified in different structures, systems and sectors? Particularly:
- in laws and policies (i.e., identifying which are gender-unequal or gender blind),
- in education (school curriculum),
- in employment markets (access to decent jobs for young women),
- in basic services (including child protection services),
- in the health sector (with a particular focus on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights),
- and in media across the Asia Pacific region.

2.3) Who are the key power-holders who need to be engaged to stop CEFM in Asia Pacific region?

2.4) What are the positive social and gender norms that should be promoted to contribute to preventing and eliminating CEFM across the Asia Pacific region?

3) How can a gender-transformative approach be applied to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of programmes and interventions to prevent and eliminate CEFM in Asia Pacific?

3.1) What are the recommended counter-measures and interventions based on the gender-transformative approach that can be implemented to transform identified social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM in formal and informal structures?

3.2) What are the positive social and gender norms that should be promoted to contribute to preventing and eliminating CEFM across the Asia Pacific region?

3.3) What are the key indicators and tools for measuring shifts in social and gender norms that perpetuate CEFM across the Asia Pacific region?

Guide questions for semi-structured interview

Introduction: Understanding both social and gender norms have been critical in addressing child, early and forced marriage (CEFM). Today we will discuss about what you have observed and heard of regarding the social norms and gender norms that perpetuate CEFM in the country/ies you work in.

Social norms are what individuals believe others in their reference group (i.e., the group they identify themselves to be a part of) think and do, or what they believe is typical behaviour or expected from them. So social norms influence one's behaviour either because 'other people do it' or 'because other people expect me to do it'.

Gender norms are a sub-set of social norms which define what are the acceptable and appropriate actions for women and men in a given group or society. CEFM is both caused by, and contributes to deeply rooted gender inequalities and gender norms that are restrictive for girls and young women.

Data Set	Questions	Code
Social norms perpetuating CEFM	**1. What are some practices in the community/ies you work in regarding CEFM?** Probe: 1. a. How do the members view marriage in general, in terms of its role in their communities/society? 1. b. Are there differences across the different communities/countries/areas you work in (e.g., rural vs. urban, various religious or ethnic communities)? For example, are there some communities where CEFM is more prevalent than in others?	RQ1.1 RQ1.3 RQ1.5
	2. What are some beliefs of the members of the community/ies you work in regarding CEFM? Probe: 2. a. Do members believe that CEFM is related to protecting family reputation and heritage and contributing to the well-being of girls or transition to adulthood? 2. b. How do community members view children's roles and obligations in the family vis-à-vis the parents and other elders in the family? Can you please give examples? 2. c. How do community members view the rights of children vis-à-vis the rights of parents and other elders in the family? Can you please give examples?	

Data Set	Questions	Code
Gender norms perpetuating CEFM	**3. How do the above practices, beliefs and views about the roles and rights of children differ between girl and boy children?** Probe: 3. a. How do these reflect their views about the roles and rights of married women and men? Can you please give examples? 3. b. Why do you think there is an expectation for girls to marry? Is the expectation the same for boys? Please give examples. 3. c. Are these views and beliefs held by both women and men in the families and communities? Please give examples.	RQ1.2 RQ1.3 RQ1.4
	4. What are differences in the way women and men are perceived or treated, or how their experiences differ in the community/ies you work with in terms of: • Roles and responsibilities • Access to and control of resources and the benefits from those resources • Participation in decision making in the household and in the communities • Gender-based violence Probe: 4. a. What are the different types of biases that girls experience that increase their risk for CEFM? Please provide examples. 4. b. Why do you think there is an expectation for girls to marry? 4. c. How do these affect and aggravate the situation of married girls?	
	5. What are some root-causes and factors that increase the risk of girls from CEFM? Probe: 5. a. Are there particular individual characteristics of girls at greater risk for CEFM? Are there particular groups of girls at greater risk? 5. b. What are relational factors that increase risk for CEFM? (e.g. parent-child dynamics, mother-in-law and mother of the child, etc.) 5. c. What are gender biased dynamics and factors (i.e. discriminatory against women and girls) that increase risk for CEFM that exist in the community, in institutions and in the policy environment?	RQ1.1 RQ1.2

Data Set	Questions	Code
Formal and informal power structures and systems Formal and informal power structures and systems	**6. Who are the key power-holders and decision-makers perpetuating CEFM?** Probe: 6. a. Who in the family normally makes the decision about when and to whom a girl marries? 6. b. Are there other family members in the household or in the communities who are influential in deciding about a child's marriage (e.g., mother-in-law, community leaders/elites, religious leaders)?	RQ2.1 RQ2.2 RQ2.3
	7. How are the social and gender norms you mentioned reflected or amplified in the various institutions? Probe: 7. a. In laws and policies (i.e., identifying which are gender-unequal or gender blind), 7. b. education (school curriculum), 7. c. employment markets (access to decent jobs for young women), 7. d. basic services (including child protection services), 7. e. the health sector (with a particular focus on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights), 7. f. and in media across the Asia Pacific region.	RQ2.1 RQ2.2
	8. Who are the key power-holders who need to be engaged to end CEFM in Asia Pacific region? Probe: 8. a. in the family 8. b. in the community 8. c. in institutions such as the schools 8. d. in the political environment (various levels of government)	RQ2.3
	9. In your opinion and/or experience what are possible counter-measures and interventions that can transform views, beliefs and practices that contribute to gender inequality and unjust treatment of girls, which perpetuate CEFM? Probe: 9. a. in formal structures? 9. b. in informal structures? Please provide examples for a and b	RQ3.1

Data Set	Questions	Code
Formal and informal power structures and systems	**10. What are the positive social and gender norms that should be promoted to contribute to preventing and eliminating CEFM across the Asia Pacific region?** Probe: 10. a. in terms of individual views and attitudes of girls 10. b. in families 10. c. in communities 10. d. in institutions (e.g., schools) 10. e. in political environment (various levels of government) Please provide examples for a-e	RQ3.2
	11. Have you come across or used any tools for measuring shifts in social and gender norms that perpetuate CEFM across the Asia Pacific region? Probe: 11. a. Did you find them useful? Why or why not? 11. b. What type/s of tools do you wish existed which could help in your/your organisation's work? If you have any examples of tools that you think we can use as reference, please send the tools to us	RQ3.3

ANNEX 2: CONSENT FORM

Regional Research on identifying negative social and gender norms and power structures perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through gender transformative approach

We work for ResultsinHealth (RiH), an international development advisory firm, based in the Netherlands. My name is _____ and I will be conducting this interview; and I am accompanied by _____, who will support me in this interview. Plan International Asia-Pacific (APAC) asked RiH to conduct the Regional Research on identifying negative social and gender norms and power structures perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through gender transformative approach.

We would like you to be interviewed as part of this research. You have been invited to participate in this interview because of your knowledge and/or involvement in the projects related to CEFM.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this interview today is voluntary. You are free to decide if you want to take part or not. If you do agree to be interviewed, you can still change your mind at any time during the interview, without any issues/implications for your job, access to services, or other consequences. This is a research activity instead of a project delivery so we are only here to gather your insights and sharing, and we have nothing to offer other than listening. This also means there will be no other direct benefits related to this time we spend together today. However, we do want to highlight that your inputs are very valuable for Plan International APAC Regional Hub and country offices in Asia Pacific to strengthen their interventions in ending CEFM in the region.

Procedures

The interview will take 60-75 minutes and will include questions that focus on your opinions about social and gender norms and power structures perpetuating CEFM in Asia-Pacific.

Risks and discomforts

During the interview, you may decide not to answer a question without giving a reason and we will proceed. You can also decline to answer parts of any question. You may experience some discomfort in sharing some information. We will respect your decisions and not pressure you to talk.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All information discussed during the interview will be kept confidential. With your permission, we would like to record this interview. All the consent forms, recordings, notes, and transcripts will be kept strictly confidential. All records will be stored according to the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018.

This interview will be carried out by RiH and the data will be recorded and stored according to RiH procedures. The consent forms and documentation of interviews conducted will be kept digitally in password-protected computers. The research team will also store the recordings on password-protected phones, tablets, or computers. The research team will upload all electronic files to the RiH internal drive that has encrypted and password-protected files. Only the research team will have access to the data. The recording will only be used to make sure our notes are correct and will be destroyed once the research project is over in May 2022.

We will use your information to make an assessment of the project and include your responses in the end report. Your information will be kept confidential and we will make sure that you cannot be identified in the reports or other documents of the research project.

Your name will not be listed in the research report. In case we use a direct quote of what you said in the report, we will refer to you using an alias or as one of the research respondents, more generally. Should there be anything you have said which you don't want us to use in a report or publication (even anonymously), please let us know.

To provide ResultsinHealth with the authority to use your information for this project we would like to ask you to confirm a few data protection statements:

1. Do you agree that this discussion can be digitally recorded by ResultsinHealth and that these recordings can then be transcribed (written down) for the purpose of making an accurate record of the interview?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

2. Do you agree that ResultsinHealth can store your answers given during the interview securely on password-protected computers and folders on its servers for as long as the research is going on?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

3. Do you understand that ResultsinHealth will destroy the recordings, all notes, and transcripts after the research is finished?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

4. Do you agree that ResultsinHealth can securely use the answers you have provided to write reports of the research?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

5. Your name will not be mentioned when we are writing about the project outcome. Can we share your information (e.g. demographic) in the dissemination workshop (for a limited audience) without your name?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

   If no, please explain what would be acceptable to you for us to do with your words shared in this interview.

   _____

Information from this interview will be written about anonymously.

Contact information

For more information about this review, you can contact the research team: Lingga at TriUtamaL@resultsinhealth.org using the reference "PLAN CEFM"

Written Consent Statement

I have read the preceding information. I have had the chance to ask questions about it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily consent to be a participant in this research and understand that I have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time.

☐ I agree to be interviewed *(please tick)*   ☐ I do not agree to be interviewed *(please tick)*

Respondent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

STORMING THE NORMS   83

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage in Asia-Pacific and addressing them through a gender-transformative approach

ANNEX 3: LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

No.	Name	Organization	Country Rep	Gender
1	Raša Sekulović	Plan International Asia Pacific Regional Hub	Regional	Male
2	Shanti Upadhyaya	Plan International Nepal	Nepal	Female
3	Etha Mota	Plan International Timor Leste	Timor Leste	Female
4	Rara	Plan International Timor Leste	Timor Leste	Female
5	Sawada Chan Krisna	Plan International Cambodia	Cambodia	Female
6	Israt Baki	Plan International Laos	Laos	Female
7	Megawati	Plan International Indonesia	Indonesia	Female
8	Kashfia Feroz	Plan International Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Female
9	Tahmina Huq	UNICEF Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Female
10	Emelita Goddard	World Hope International	Cambodia	Female
11	Chusana Han	ASEAN Secretariat	Regional	Female
12	Kanha Chan	UNICEF Cambodia	Cambodia	Female
13	Madhu Sudhan Dawadi	CWIN Nepal	Nepal	Male
14	Upala Devi	UNFPA Asia and the Pacific Regional Office	Regional	Female
15	Rakibul Bahar	Combatting Early Marriage in Bangladesh (CEMB) Project	Bangladesh	Male
16	Ambika Prasad	Plan International Nepal	Nepal	Male
17	Anand Tamang	CREHPA, Girls not Bride Secretariat	Nepal	Male
18	Nanda Dwinta Sari	Woman Health Foundation (YKP)	Indonesia	Female
19	Jayalaxmi Chaulagain	CAD Nepal	Nepal	Female
20	Dr. Nur Rofiah	Indonesia Women's Ulema Congress	Indonesia	Female

No.	Name	Organization	Country Rep	Gender
21	Rawnak Jahan	CARE Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Female
22	Americo de Araujo	Mane Ho Visuan Foun (Man with New Vision NGO)	Timor Leste	Male
23	Damião da Silva Pereira	Fundasaun Forum Comunicações Juventude (FBO)	Timor Leste	Male
24	Yan Lay	CRC-Cambodia	Cambodia	Male
25	Alberto Pérez Pereiro	Breogán Research and Consulting	Cambodia	Male
26	Octaviana Martins	Fundasaun Patria (NGO)	Timor Leste	Female
27	Risya Kori	UNFPA Indonesia	Indonesia	Female
28	Norcahyo	UNFPA Indonesia	Indonesia	Male
29	Manivanh Suyavong	Gender Development Association	Laos	Female
30	Mike Verawati	KPI (Indonesian Women's Coalition)	Indonesia	Female

Regional research on identifying negative social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and
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    Early and Forced Marriage in Asia.

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    why they matter in prevention science. Sociology of Health and Illness, vol. 42, no. 2,
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86   STORMING THE NORMS
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Plan International's Asia-Pacific (APAC) Regional Hub embarked on this research to contribute to the global body of knowledge about social and gender norms perpetuating Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM), while promoting a Gender Transformative Approach. Based on an in-depth literature review and key informant interviews, this research report identifies negative and harmful social and gender norms causing and perpetuating CEFM and aggravating the situation of married girls in South and South East Asia.

While findings reinforce the assertion that social and gender norms curtail adolescent girls' freedoms, access to resources and participation in decision-making, the Storming the Norms report addresses the need for more in-depth and targeted information on which specific social and gender norms perpetuate CEFM, in particular, gender norms that ascribe a lower value to girls in patriarchal societies, which in turn, limit married girls' agency, autonomy and access to opportunities, and place them at greater risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

Recommendations to tackle and transform social and gender norms that perpetuate CEFM, including strategic actions, provide further direction for investment in this important area.

This research also led to the development of the Scoping, Highlighting, Identifying, Formulating and Transforming (SHIFT) Social and Gender Norms Tools Package. This Tools Package can be used to gather and analyse quantitative data and qualitative information on social and gender norms perpetuating CEFM, and to measure shifts in these norms at different stages of the project cycle.

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