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**Advancing Learning and  
Innovation on Gender Norms**

# **Consolidating Practice and Knowledge: Gender Norms, History and Change**

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**October 2020**

# Sexual Exploitation and Normalised Attitudes and Behaviours

- **For boys and men:**
  - Sexual prowess is a sign of Masculinity
  - Men need sex
  - Lack of sanctions / stigma for men
- **For girls and women its expected that:**
  - Early marriage is 'normal'
  - Onset of puberty normalises early sex as a mark of maturity
  - Sex for favours or goods is normalised even if stigmatised
  - Social sanctions and stigma are applied to girls, but not to boys/ men

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# Norm Definitions



# Norm Definitions

**Social norms as the implicit, informal rules that most people accept and follow.**

- Influenced by wider environment
- Maintained by rewards and sanctions
- Embedded in formal and informal institutions
- Only change when enough people choose to act (or are compelled to act) in a different way, creating a new norm

**Gender norms are a sub-set of social norms. They describe how people of a particular gender (and often age) are expected to behave, in a given social context.**

- Intersect with norms related to ethnicity, class, disability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, among other issues

# Different Interpretations



Broadly, the sociological tradition emphasises the role of norms in constituting society and governing social behaviour, whereas social psychological and game theoretical perspectives focus more on why people comply with social norms

# Conceptualisation of Social and Gender norms (Cisgli et al.)

Gender norms in gender literature	Social norms in social psychology and behavioural economics
Gender norms are everywhere in the world, embedded in institutions and reproduced by our actions.	Social norms are in our minds; our beliefs are shaped by our experiences of other people's actions and their manifestations of approval and disapproval.
Gender norms are produced and reproduced through our actions and enforced by power-holders who benefit from compliance with those norms.	Social norms maintain themselves, and do not necessarily benefit anyone.
Gender norms are often studied as shaping our individual attitudes.	Social norms are often studied as diverging from our individual attitudes (with a focus on identifying when we agree or disagree with the norm).
We follow the gender norms of our culture, society, or group, the boundaries of which are usually blurred.	We follow the social norms of our reference group (the people whose views matter most to us), which tends to be well-defined.
Changing gender norms requires changing institutions and power dynamics. This often happens through conflict and renegotiation of the power equilibrium.	Changing social norms (at its simplest) requires changing our misconceptions about what other people in our reference group do and approve of.
Changing gender norms is a political process that leads to equality between women and men.	Changing social norms can be a technically driven process to promote greater well-being for both women and men.

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**Norm Change Over  
Time**

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**United Nations  
(UN) Secretary-  
General, 2015,  
20-year review**

*‘Overall progress...has been unacceptably slow with stagnation and even regress in some contexts’. Change towards gender equality ‘has not been deep enough; nor has it been irreversible’ (United Nations, 2015: 9).*

**UN Women’s  
Annual Report  
2019**

*‘Around the world, over 2.5 billion women and girls suffer the consequences of discriminatory laws and gaps in legal protections’, despite the lofty commitments made in Beijing and to UN human rights conventions.*

# Progress?

- 1990-2014 - **Adolescent childbearing dropped** from 34 to 17 out of every 1000 girls (high income) and 64-54 (low income) (UNFPA 2016).
- The number of **countries recognising domestic violence** as a crime has risen from just 2 in 1984 to 76 in 2013.
- In 2014, **women held 17% of ministerial positions**, up from 15% in 2000.
- **Women's steadily increased their formal political participation** globally, yet they account for less than 22% of MPs and fewer than 5% of mayors (World Bank, 2014).



# Stagnation

- **Violence statistics remain high.** Global estimates - 35% of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual IPV or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime (UN Women, 2015).
- **Contraception use an 11% increase** 1990-2000 (3% increase since 2000).
- **Two thirds of adults lacking basic literacy skills are women** – a proportion unchanged since 2000.
- Between 1992 and 2012 (20 years) the **gender gap in labour market participation** narrowed by just two percentage points from 28-26%.
- In Southern Asia and Eastern Asia, **the gap has grown even wider** In 2015, the gender gap in the employment rate was 25.5 percentage points in women's disfavour, only 0.6 percentage points less than in 1995.
- On average, **women carry out at least two and a half times more unpaid household and care work** than men in countries where there is data available.



## *‘A woman’s reputation is like water in a yam’s leaves – even a small slip and it will fall off’*

- *‘there is little breakthrough around women’s bodies..... in attitudes that the way you dress makes you responsible for rape. Another example is the antipornography bill.*
- *Everyone is up in arms about women’s body – restricting what she can do or not do, how she can move or not move.’*
- *violence ‘is also part of the backlash... The egotism and machismo of men who are threatened...’*
- *The man still thinks he has the right to slap, but fears being reported. It is not about feeling that she doesn’t deserve beating, but the fear of the law.*
- *‘virginity is still a strong social norm’ and ‘in Nepali cultures, morality and goodness are all linked up into sexual activities – for women, not for men.’*

# Paradoxical Change

*‘sense of chaos, with which the leaders, the guardians of ethnic and religious values in the ideational sphere, are struggling, in the face of larger forces of socio-economic and cultural change, their authority challenged as cultural control and the power of sanctions are lost’*

(Watson, 2018:192).

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# **Purity, Violence and Patriarchy**

# ‘the natural order’

**Bourdieu called**  
**‘doxa’ (1990):** *the gradual socialisation of people into gendered norms through everyday practice, until certain practices are beyond questioning, and their outcomes become the norm.*

# ‘Doxa’

# Patriarchy is Doxa

***Patriarchy*** – the male grip on political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property and assets

Still the norm in so many contexts (if not all) that this apparently ‘natural’ order is almost everyone’s ‘**doxa**’ to a greater or lesser degree.

# Patriarchal brake gives way

***‘I think its ‘crap’ because you can’t  
put a price on someone when you  
get down to it’***

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**Crisis**





# Crisis

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**Gender norms and crisis**  
By Georgia Plank  
June 2020

Annotated bibliography

Blog 9 June 2020



**Could the Covid-19 crisis advance gender equality? Perspectives from Fiji**  
Author: William Hamilton

Published by: ALIGN

Annotated bibliography 1 June 2020



**Gender norms and crisis**  
This annotated bibliography brings together key resources on crises and gender norms to shed light on the potential outcomes of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Published by: ALIGN

Multi-blog 17 April 2020



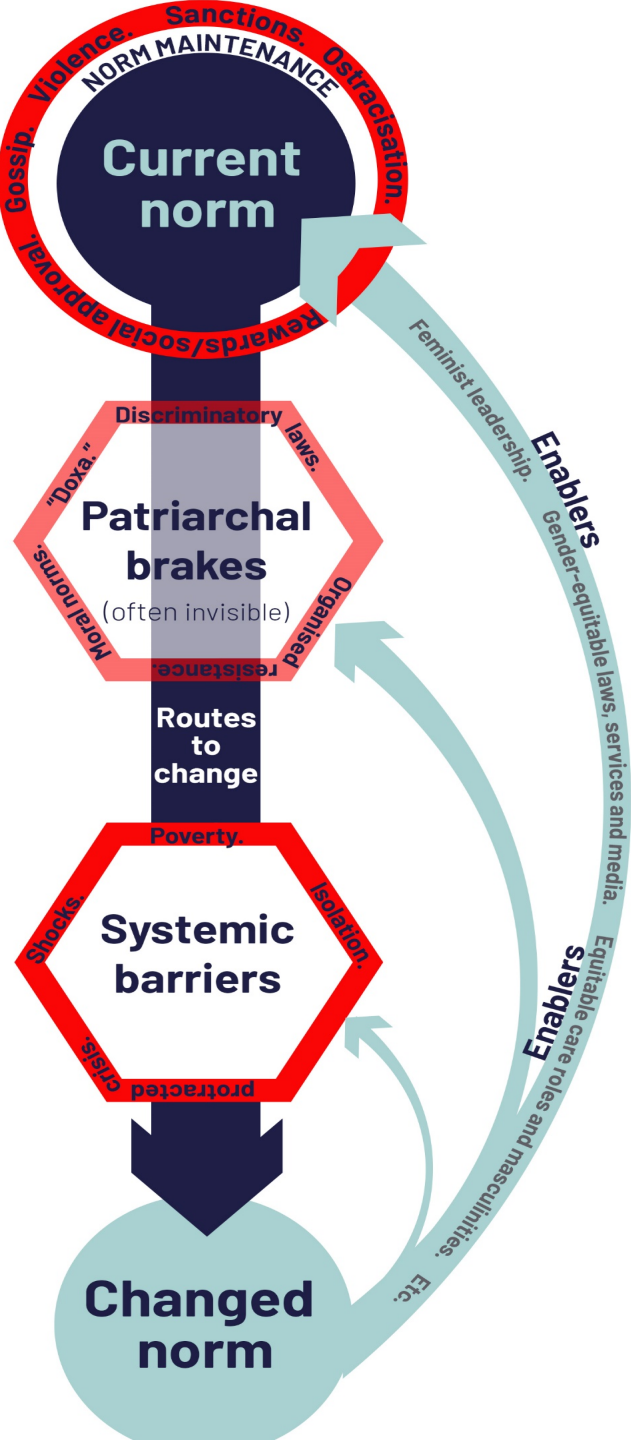
**Covid-19 - why gender matters**  
This multi-blog by experts from ODI looks at gender and Covid-19 in relation to leadership, violence, economic empowerment, education, health, social protection, youth, data and humanitarian contexts.

Published by: ODI



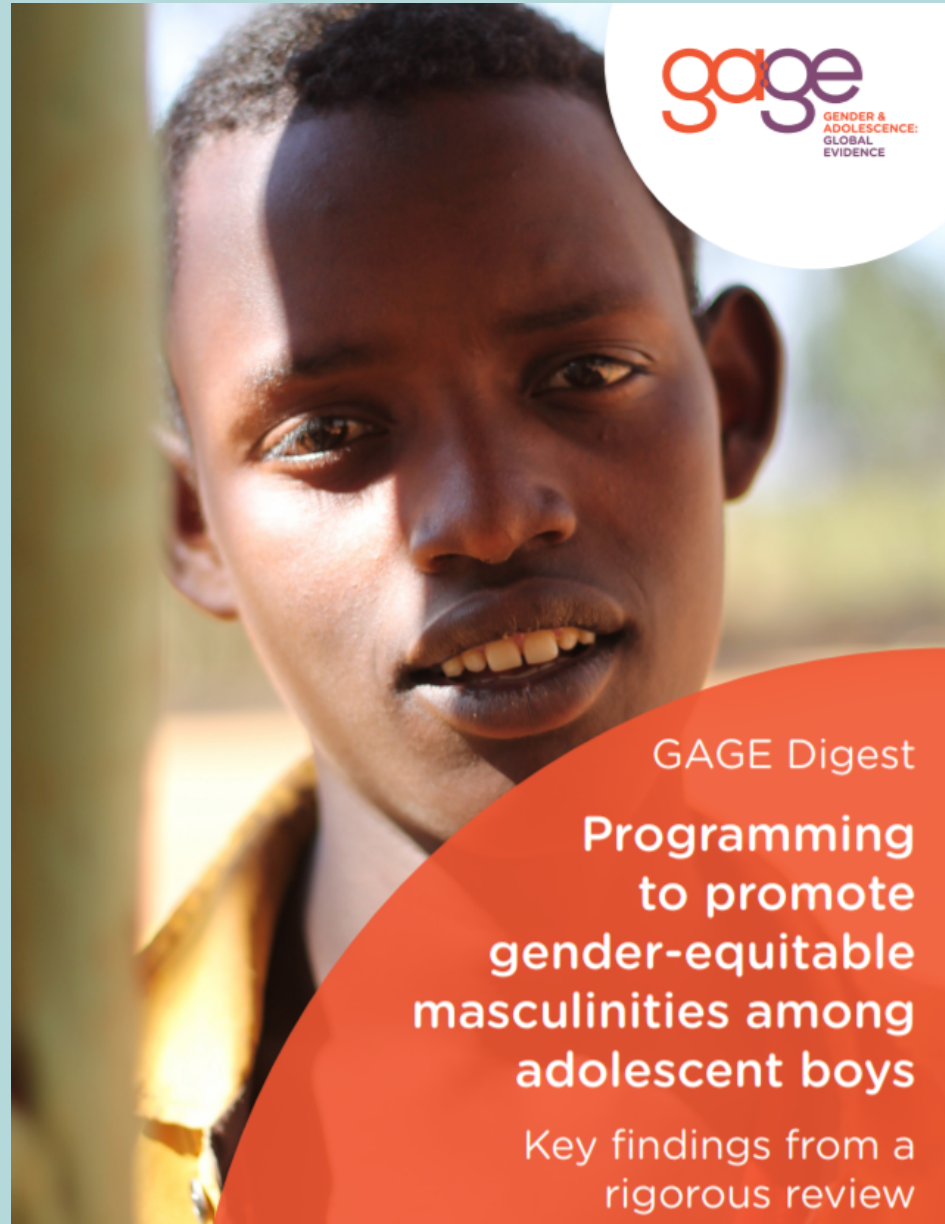
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## Gender norm change brakes



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With  
Boys



**Group-based gender equality and positive masculinities programmes with adolescent boys show great promise.**

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# Communities and Individuals



Blog 19 May 2020



**Building momentum for scaling-up prevention of gender-based violence: the importance of norm change initiatives at community level**

Authors: The Community for Understanding Scale Up

Published by: ALIGN, CUSP

Blog 16 April 2020



**How gender norms play out in the Covid-19 response**

Authors: Rosemary Morgan, Sara E. Davies

Published by: ALIGN

Case study 26 September 2019



**Working with men to break patterns of gender-based violence in Mexico**

Author: M.A. Yair Maldonado Lezama

Published by: ALIGN

Case study 9 September 2019



**Using soccer to challenge norms around Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting**

Author: Ugwu Somtochukwu Nnamdi

Published by: ALIGN

Briefing paper 18 March 2019



**Preventing intimate partner violence among young people: The role of comprehensive sexuality education**

Authors: Shelly Makleff, Florencia Barindelli, Rosa Icela Zavala, Jovita Garduño, Vanessa Ivon Silva Márquez, Cicely Marston

Published by: ALIGN, Mexfam

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# Economic Empowerment



Blog

8 April 2020



**The influence of urban millennials on gender norms**

Author: Kim Patria

Published by: ALIGN

Case study

18 March 2020



**Women at work: Engaging young women in construction in Ghana**

Author: Ethel Seiwa Boateng

Published by: ALIGN

Case study

9 March 2020



**Breaking barriers: work for women and work for men in Chamanculo, Mozambique**

Authors: Maria Ybarra Enguiz, Astrid Groenbaek

Published by: ALIGN

Blog

4 July 2019



**Social norms and the 'power within' – how MUVA builds young people's soft skills**

Authors: Jana Bischler, Anne Cecile Manicom Rebelo

Published by: ALIGN

Blog

4 December 2018



**All hands on deck to shift gender, social and cultural norms**

Author: Lelemba Phiri

Published by: ALIGN

Report

18 May 2018



**Report: Private sector involvement in development: What impact on gender norms?**

Author: Rebecca Calder

Published by: ALIGN



# Ugandan Woman Activist and Feminist

A fatwa issued against her: pastors are ‘obsessed’ with her and her ***‘satanic ways’***.

She was once voted the ***‘worst woman of the year’*** in a national newspaper, taking her place alongside Joseph Kony (of the Lord’s Resistance Army) as the worst man.

She wears this as ***‘a badge of honour’*** because it means they are taking her seriously: ***‘I am a threat to their ideologies...If you are rocking the boat, of course you will be attacked. I would be disappointed if not.’***

# Generational Change

***‘I did not want to be sold – I didn’t think it right that my worth was being calculated in cows’. ‘I refused to be the object of negotiation’.***

***I have created my own culture’.***

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**END**