

# Gender and Adolescence Research Panorama

## Summary

Quarter 4 2019 Edition



## INTRODUCTION

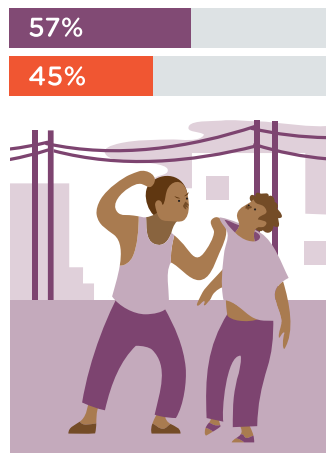
The number of refugees in the world has increased exponentially in recent years with the current number reaching over 25 million. For the first time, on 17 and 18 December 2019, leaders in the UN, civil society and development organisations will come together in Geneva to address this growing problem. The forum will aim to address key issues including: arrangements for burden and responsibility-sharing, education, jobs and livelihoods, energy and infrastructure, solutions and protection capacity. Growing attention to refugees is apparent in the research community, and new evidence is starting to bring to light the multiple vulnerabilities faced by this population. This edition of the GAGE Research Panorama has a strong focus on research based in humanitarian settings, spanning all capability areas – from education and learning to psychosocial well-being and economic empowerment – and highlighting the impact that displacement can have on adolescents' development and well-being. GAGE's own research also reflects this and this quarter we are excited to share our synthesis report from our baseline research in Jordan with refugees and host communities, a new policy brief that explores the capabilities of Bangladeshi and Rohingya adolescents in Cox's Bazar, and an article that explores the human rights of adolescents with disabilities in conflict-affected settings.

Strengthening the voice and agency of adolescents and refugees is a vital component to increasing their ability to reach their full capabilities. To highlight this, on the 30th Anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, GAGE held an event titled 'Strengthening the voice and agency of disadvantaged adolescents'. The importance of voice and agency was powerfully made by Dr. Faith Mwangi-Powell, the CEO of Girls Not Brides, who emphasised that young people can become 'champions of change' and that we need to 'support them from the back'. Channelling this, we have also included in this summary infographics from our baseline research in Ethiopia designed for a youth audience, allowing adolescents the opportunity to actively engage with our research.

The GAGE Research Panorama provides an overview of current research on adolescents over the most recent GAGE quarter, as well as external grey and published literature, specifically looking at articles that relate, from a gender perspective, to GAGE's key capability domains: education and learning; bodily integrity and freedom from violence; health, nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health; psychosocial well-being; voice and agency; and economic empowerment. It also aims to look at the ways specific vulnerabilities such as age, disability and refugee status further disadvantage adolescents in achieving these capabilities.

## Freedom from violence

Bullying is more common in **urban areas** than in **rural areas**.



**Rural adolescents** are more likely to report violence at home than **urban adolescents**.

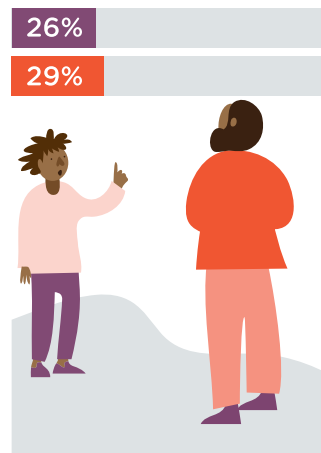
Almost 3/4 of adolescents of urban and rural areas have been violently punished by a teacher.



Girls are blamed when they experience sexual violence.

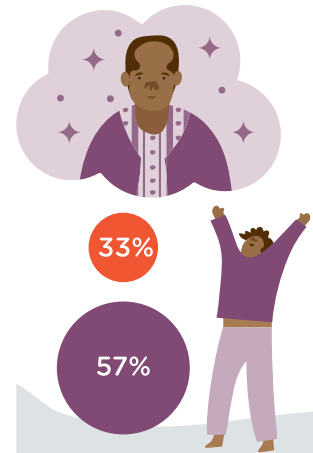
## Voice and agency

Few adolescents in **urban** or **rural** areas feel comfortable expressing an opinion to an adult.



**Urban adolescents** are more likely than **rural adolescents** to leave their community on a weekly basis.

**Urban adolescents** are more likely to have a role model than **rural adolescents**.



In **urban areas**, older adolescents are more likely to have a mobile phone than their younger peers.

Graphic designed for adolescents to illustrate the GAGE baseline findings in Ethiopia. By Ottavia Pasta/GAGE 2019

Finally, we are also pleased to share a number of recently published policy briefs, including on why it is critical to address the paucity of adolescent- and gender-responsive targets in the SDGs, and three new journal articles on: 1) adolescents' experiences of violence in pastoralist communities in Afar, Ethiopia; 2) the impact of gender-restrictive norms on adolescent psychosocial and physical health in Bangladesh and Ethiopia; and 3) a review of the evidence on the effectiveness of informal education programming for adolescents.

## Cross-cutting findings

It has been increasingly recognised that adolescence is an important window of opportunity in which policy and programme efforts can make substantial change. Yet, **less than 8% of the 232 SDG indicators are gender or adolescent specific**. This reduces the visibility of adolescents in the data and means that their specific needs are not met (Guglielmi and Jones, 2019). Refugees are also left invisible within the SDG indicators; IRC found that in the 2019 national progress review **only 13 out of 42 mentioned refugees** and none included data to measure refugees' progress within the SDGs (International Rescue Committee, 2019).

These reports highlight that refugee and internally displaced adolescents are one of the most unaccounted for groups within the SDGs. This point has also been emphasised in IDMC's new report *Twice invisible*, which highlights the lack of data on both children and internally displaced people (IDP). The report found that globally **17 million children are living in internal displacement due to conflict** (IDMC, 2019).

## Policy and practice implications

- » Ensure that data is gender – and age- disaggregated and prioritises the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in national surveys.
- » Prioritise the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in national reporting on the SDGs, and ensure buy-in from humanitarian agencies to this critical accountability mechanism.

## Education

Conflict and displacement can make it very difficult for adolescents to access quality education. This is exacerbated for adolescents with disabilities, and many living in conflict-affected areas in the Middle East are unable to access any schooling (Presler-Marshall et al., 2019). In Bangladesh, **Rohingya adolescents have no access to formal education** due to refugees' exclusion from local schools and governments' refusal to allow their curriculum to be used. Some adolescents attend learning centres, yet these are often spaces for recreation rather than quality education (Guglielmi and Jones, 2019). However, globally, **non-formal education can bring positive impacts to adolescents' lives, particularly when they are informed by young people**. Additionally, programmes are effective when they focus on expanding life skills and community connection, have long timespans, and are provided by skilled facilitators (Simao et al., 2019).

In Lebanon, high rates of violent discipline in schools can create a hostile school environment for many adolescents. **Links were also found with poverty, as poorer students were more likely to miss school** and be less able to study (Bahou and Zakharia, 2019).

### Policy and practice implications

- » Invest in formal and non-formal education that is specialised for adolescents with disabilities and accessible for refugees, ensuring teachers are appropriately trained and schools have appropriate resources.
- » Ensure teachers in school are appropriately trained in classroom management and non-violent discipline techniques.

## Bodily integrity

The IRC has estimated that in 2019 14 million refugee and displaced women and girls experienced sexual violence (International Rescue Committee, 2019). Supporting this finding, GAGE mixed-methods research in Cox's Bazar found high rates of sexual harassment among Rohingya refugee and host communities, and only 48% of girls feel safe with a friend once a week compared to 83% of males (Guglielmi, 2019). During times of crisis, non-partner violence such as rape is often perceived to be the most prevalent risk for women and girls. However, emerging research demonstrates **that rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrated against women and girls are higher than non-partner sexual violence**, even during times of conflict and humanitarian crises (IRC and The Global Women's Institute, 2019).

Institutional barriers can also have an impact on levels of violence within a community. In the Afar region of Ethiopia, barriers such as **limited confidential reporting spaces and a lack of gender- and adolescent-friendly legal services contribute to the high levels of violence** in this area (Jones et al., 2019).

### Policy and practice implications

- » Target IPV through community-based programming that focuses on social norm change that engages religious and community leaders, civil society and community members.
- » Adequately tailor reporting and legal services to meet the needs of adolescents and girls, and ensure that they are both easily accessible and confidential.

## Health, nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health

The new State of the World's Children report *Children, food and nutrition: growing well in a changing world* estimates that two out of every three children do not have the minimum recommended diverse diets to allow for healthy development. Adolescents in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) have very poor diets, **42% consume sugary soft drinks every day and 46% eat fast food at least once per week** (UNICEF, 2019). Adding to this, there are extremely high levels (81%) of insufficient physical activity in students aged 11–17 years in LMICs. In the past 15 years, this has decreased significantly for boys but not for girls, resulting in **widening gender differences in insufficient activity levels** (Guthold, et al., 2019).

### Policy and practice implications

- » Introduce national campaigns aimed at encouraging exercise, particularly for adolescent girls, and combine this with community-based interventions that aim to break down social norms discouraging female physical exercise.
- » Empower adolescents to make healthy food choices through increased nutrition education and ensuring adolescents have access to affordable, healthy food choices.

## Psychosocial well-being

As children move into adolescence, they reach a time of increased psychosocial vulnerability. In addition, restrictive gender attitudes (RGAs) begin to take hold. In Bangladesh and Ethiopia, **RGAs were found to be negatively associated with psychological well-being and self-esteem** (with additional impacts on self-reported health and adolescent hunger) in both boys and girls (Baird et al., 2019).

Adolescents and youth living in conflict settings are highly susceptible to mental health issues, largely due to exposure to violence, uncertainty and fear for the future and disruption of their support networks. It is estimated that around 24 million children are at risk of mild to moderate health disorders and 7 million more are at risk of severe mental health disorders. However, funding allocation does not match these high numbers, and **only 0.14% of development aid funding from 2015–2017 has been allocated to mental health support** (Save the Children, 2019).

### Policy and practice implications

- » Develop gender programmes that aim to tackle harmful restrictive gender norms and target both male and female adolescents.
- » Invest in youth-friendly mental health services and reporting systems in humanitarian responses, ensuring long-term mental health infrastructure is additionally strengthened.

## Voice and agency

Intergenerational change is an important factor shaping community social norms. In Nepal, the influence of mothers' capabilities was universally associated with their daughters' capabilities; highlighting the **vital role mothers play in social-norm change** (Jackson et al., 2019).

In addition to generational norm change, adolescents' access to their digital environment is also changing. It is **estimated that by 2025, 75% of the world's population will be online**. This can bring great benefits to adolescents, but also significant risks such as online harassment and exposure to age-inappropriate content, and there is a significant lack of laws and legislations targeting this (Broadband Commission, 2019). Additionally, parents in middle-income countries support their children's online activities less compared to high-income countries and parental support was found to be most effective when it is non-restrictive (Livingston, 2019).

### Policy and practice implications

- » Target social norm change through engaging and discussing with mothers and daughters paying particular attention to links between mothers' missed opportunities and their aspirations for their daughters.
- » Introduce online safety strategies with youth-friendly reporting mechanisms and digital safety education for both adolescents and their parents.

## Economic empowerment

Low employment rates can drive both international and domestic migration. A recent publication by the IOM reviews the evidence on female youth migration in South-East Asia; a key theme that emerged from this review is that **underlying gender inequality is a key driver for migration** in this population (IOM, 2019). In Nepal, employment rates for adolescents and young women (15–34 years) are extremely low; **almost 50% are not in any employment**, education or training compared to 20% of males. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) could be a way to bridge this gender gap, yet many barriers persist. Factors related to education, the labour market and social norms are those that most affect girls' ability to access TVET (Paudel, 2019).

### Policy and practice implications

- » Stronger investment in, and promotion of, gender-transformative TVET courses that aim to target girls and provide routes into employment.
- » Develop work-based programming to support adolescents and young women to widen their economic opportunities, find alternative forms of income and prevent them from being forced to migrate.