Plan International UK

REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES: GIRLS CHALLENGING THE GENDER RULES

Benin, Togo, and Uganda

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ABBREVIATIONS

GBV	Gender-based violence
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
SEA	South East Asia
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa

SUMMARY

This latest report from the *Real Choices, Real Lives* Cohort study is the first in a series of three reports for 2019, focusing on the Sub-Saharan African countries – Benin, Togo, and Uganda. Subsequent reports will focus on Latin America and the Caribbean (Brazil, Dominican Republic, and El Salvador) and South East Asia (Cambodia, the Philippines, and Vietnam).

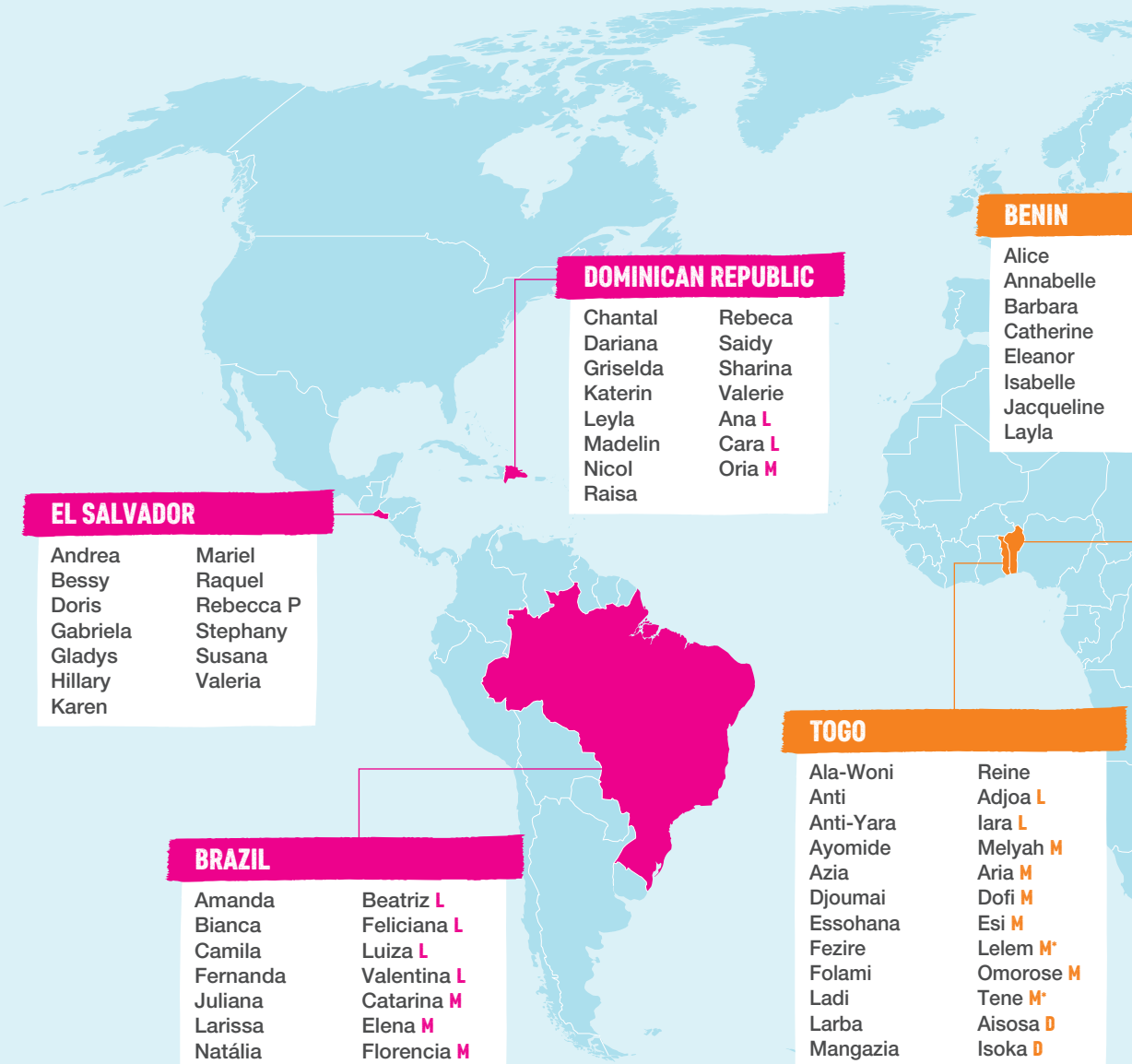
The report looks in-depth at the response of the 37 girls across the three Sub-Saharan African countries to the gender socialisation process which has surrounded them from birth. The analysis is based particularly on data from 2015 to 2017, when the girls moved from middle childhood into early adolescence. It draws heavily on detailed longitudinal case studies of three girls. What the study has found is that gender norms are not reproduced seamlessly, and the report therefore looks closely at disruption – at the 'glitches' in this process. *How* and *why* do girls start to question the expectations they grow up with? *When* and *why* do they decide that "something different" is possible? Do they continue to hold this belief as they grow older? The data tells us that all of the Sub-Saharan Africa Cohort girls do challenge the expectations of their families, communities and wider society about what they should be and do. But this process is not linear. It fluctuates both across time and in relation to the different aspects of a girl's life. *Real Choices, Real Lives* is uniquely placed to track these fluctuations, examine their significance and use this information to both support girls' resistance and influence programme and policy within the international development community.

Carrying out household work in Uganda, 2017

PLAN INTERNATIONAL UGANDA

MAP 1: REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES COHORT STUDY MAP

Where the girls live



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Chantal
Dariana
Griselda
Katerin
Leyla
Madelin
Nicol
Raisa
Rebeca
Saidy
Sharina
Valerie
Ana L
Cara L
Oria M

BENIN

Alice
Annabelle
Barbara
Catherine
Eleanor
Isabelle
Jacqueline
Layla

EL SALVADOR

Andrea
Bessy
Doris
Gabriela
Gladys
Hillary
Karen
Mariel
Raquel
Rebecca P
Stephany
Susana
Valeria

TOGO

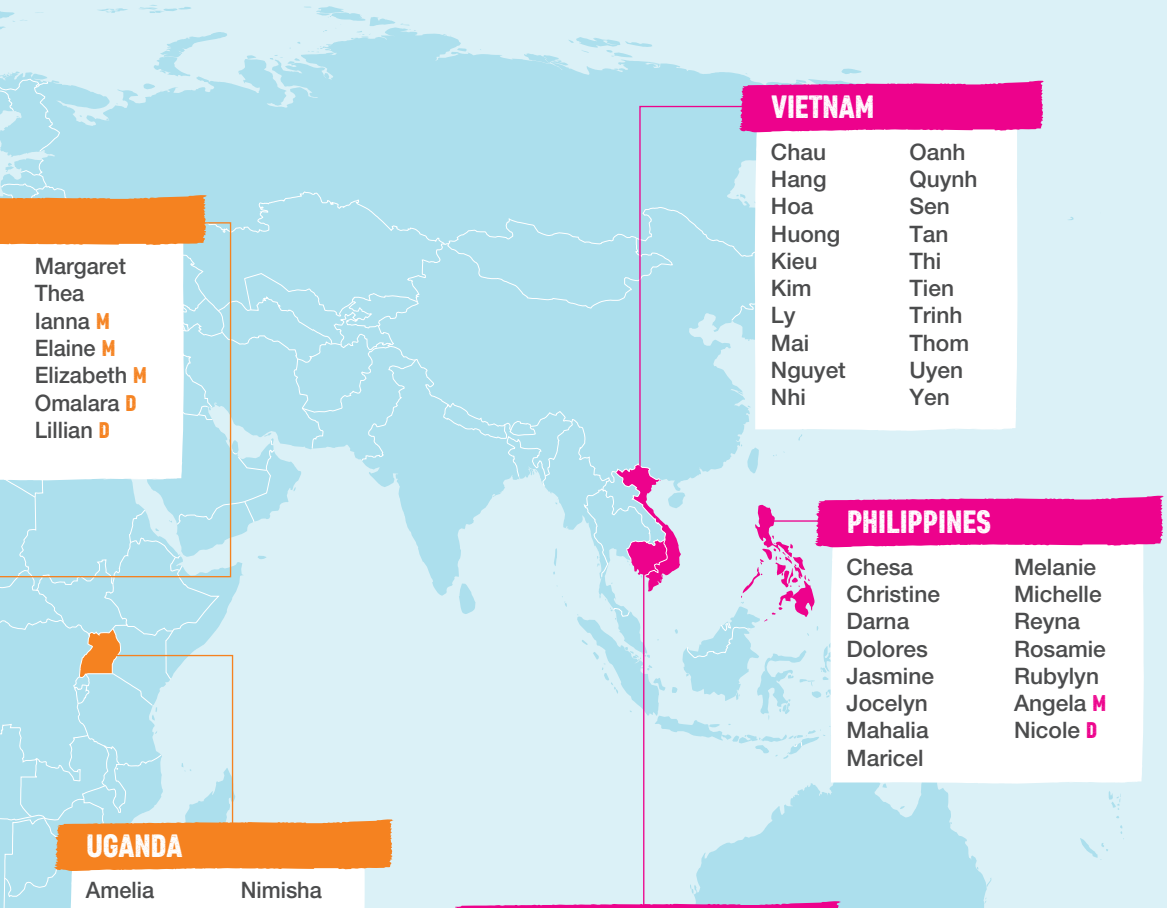
Ala-Woni
Anti
Anti-Yara
Ayomide
Azia
Djoumai
Essohana
Fezire
Folami
Ladi
Larba
Mangazia
Nana-Adja
Nini-Rike
Reine
Adjoa L
Iara L
Melyah M
Aria M
Dofi M
Esi M
Lelem M*
Omorose M
Tene M*
Aisosa D
Isoka D
Izegbe D

BRAZIL

Amanda
Bianca
Camila
Fernanda
Juliana
Larissa
Natália
Patrícia
Sofia
Tatiana
Beatriz L
Feliciana L
Luiza L
Valentina L
Catarina M
Elena M
Florencia M
Margarida M
Pietra M
Sancia M

KEY

- M Migrated
- D Deceased
- L Left the study
- * as of 2017



VIETNAM

Chau
Hang
Hoa
Huong
Kieu
Kim
Ly
Mai
Nguyet
Nhi
Oanh
Quynh
Sen
Tan
Thi
Tien
Trinh
Thom
Uyen
Yen

Margaret
Thea
Ianna M
Elaine M
Elizabeth M
Omalara D
Lillian D

PHILIPPINES

Chesa
Christine
Darna
Dolores
Jasmine
Jocelyn
Mahalia
Maricel
Melanie
Michelle
Reyna
Rosamie
Rubylyn
Angela M
Nicole D

UGANDA

Amelia
Beti
Dembe
Jane
Joy
Justine
Miremba
Namazzi
Nimisha
Rebecca
Sheila
Shifa
Sylvia
Achen M
Nasiche D

CAMBODIA

Bopha
Davy
Kannitha
Leakhena
Lina
Mony
Nakry
Puthea
Reaksmey
Roumany
Sothany
Thearika
Kanya M
Mealea M*
Sokanha M*

INTRODUCTION

Since 2007, Plan International UK has been tracking the lives of over 120 girls across nine countries in three regions (see map 1).[1] Our qualitative longitudinal study, *Real Choices, Real Lives*, provides significant insights into the choices, decisions, and realities that shape girls' lives as they grow up in a gendered world (see Box 2 and Annex 1). Given our position as an organisation promoting children's rights, with a focus on adolescent girls, the evidence from *Real Choices, Real Lives* is especially valuable for informing our gender transformative programming and policy work, as well as that of others in the field.[2] As such, evidence from the study is targeted at international development practitioners and policy makers, as well as the development research community.

In this report – the first in a series of regionally-focused reports – we look at the three Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries that are part of *Real Choices, Real Lives*: Benin, Togo, and Uganda. In subsequent reports, we will turn our attention to the Latin

Box 1 Human Development and Gender Inequality Rankings

Benin, Togo, and Uganda are ranked relatively low on the Human Development Index (HDI), and close to each other. The HDI measures a country's average development in relation to, for example, living standards, health and education. However, there is greater differentiation between the countries in relation to the 2017 Gender Inequality Index (GII). The GII measures three aspects of human development: reproductive health, empowerment, secondary education and economic participation of women/girls in relation to men/boys.

Human Development Index

Benin 163
Togo 165
Uganda 162

Gender Inequality Index

Uganda 126
Togo 140
Benin 146

Playing in Uganda, 2018

America and Caribbean (LAC) countries and the South East Asian (SEA) countries and will be able to analyse significant similarities and divergences across the study.

We also acknowledge the variation between these three SSA countries, particularly between the West African context in Benin and Togo and that of Uganda, as well as between the local contexts in which the girls live within those countries. By focusing on these three countries, and going deeper into the data, we are able to root our analysis within country contexts more thoroughly and consider commonalities, as well as differences, between the girls' experiences. The analysis and discussion of the girls' experiences in Benin, Togo, and Uganda will also frame and inform the subsequent regionally-focused reports.

Box 2 Background of the *Real Choices, Real Lives* study

Real Choices, Real Lives is a longitudinal study tracking the lives of a cohort of girls from when they were born (in 2006) until they turn 18 (in 2024). The study is undertaken in nine countries across SSA (Benin, Togo, Uganda), SEA (Cambodia, the Philippines, Vietnam) and LAC (Brazil, Dominican Republic, El Salvador). In the three SSA countries there are a total of 37 girls (10 in Benin, 15 in Togo, and 13 in Uganda).[3]

The methodology is based around a core approach which, from the beginning of the study, draws on in-depth interviews with care-givers and since 2013, when they turned seven, with the girls themselves. Whilst our study primarily focuses on the girl and her immediate family, we also consider the wider context to inform our analysis. For example, we have undertaken life histories with parents and interviews with other household members. Over the years, we will look to strengthen this – as social networks become increasingly defined in the girls' lives.

Annex 1 provides further detail on the study design, sampling, ethics, and limitations as well as an overview of the data held for Benin, Togo, and Uganda specifically.

I. REPORT OVERVIEW

Previously, we have drawn from our breadth of qualitative data to explore the daily lives of the girls and their families and have observed the ways in which age, gender, and poverty interact, often negatively, in terms of the girls' personal development and the opportunities available to them. In 2015, the study began to probe attitudes and behaviours relating to gendered norms: identifying characteristics of 'acceptors', 'consenters', and 'resistors' to these norms in the interviews with the girls and their family members. This current report uses longitudinal analysis to explore these findings up to 2017, when the Cohort girls turned 11. Upon entering early adolescence, the girls have begun to face new challenges and expectations, as well as opportunities, relating to gender.

At the same time, among the international development community, interest in adolescence has increased significantly, including prominence in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There is growing appreciation of the importance of this life-stage, particularly from a gender equality perspective. Gender socialisation, the process of males and females being raised to conform to an allocated gender role, begins from birth. However, different expectations about appropriate behaviour often intensify during adolescence and gender identities become stronger.[4,5] The onset of puberty brings *"reinforcement of social expectations and pressures from family, peers, and society to conform to hegemonic sex-types identities and roles."*[6] It is now recognised that, contrary to previous beliefs, the gender socialisation process is not completed by adolescence[7] – which is increasingly seen instead as a critical transition point presenting new opportunities and constraints, as well as providing a key window of opportunity[8] for interventions in both policy and programming.[9] However, there is still relatively limited data on adolescence, especially early adolescence, in the development literature, particularly in comparison to data on under five-year olds and adults.[10] The paucity of evidence and *"knowledge gaps around the determinants, mechanisms, experiences and outcomes of gender dynamics and discrimination in childhood"*[11] undermine policy and programming effectiveness, in particular those aimed at transforming gender relations.

With these knowledge gaps in mind, the arrival of adolescence for the Cohort girls marked a natural opportunity to take the exploration of the gender socialisation process a step further. While the *outcomes* of this socialisation have been observed in our previous reports,[12] here we focus on *where*, and *when* – and more significantly point to *how* and *why* – the girls demonstrate '**glitches**' in the process of reproducing gender norms. There is growing recognition of the need to address gendered social norms to support positive development outcomes, yet there remains a disconnect between theory and practice. This is partly because of the inherent challenges of both determining and measuring social norms[13] and of understanding why they change: *"critical information if we are to design projects that hasten the process of change and build new norms."*[14] Indeed, although there is evidence in the wider literature of 'disruption' of, or 'positive deviance' from, gender norms, this evidence, particularly where it draws from girls' own experiences rather than being linked to specific interventions, is limited.[15]

Our longitudinal analysis – grounded in in-depth case studies from Benin, Togo, and Uganda – highlights that gendered behaviours and attitudes do not perfectly reproduce. It is evident that the girls are noticing, questioning, or rejecting expectations around their behaviour and roles in many areas of their lives: **"I don't**

think it's fair that only men work in the fields and the women work at home. I think women can do what men do and vice-versa" (Barbara, Benin, 2017); **"I…can't be forced to do things I don't want to, whatever I do, it's my decision"** (Justine, Uganda, 2017); **"I have some friends who are boys…but my mum and dad do not like it at all that I keep company with boys, they say that boys aren't any good"** (Essohana, Togo, 2017).

We analyse these 'glitches', or deviations, not as *evidence* of disruption or change of gendered social norms, but rather as *markers* of where there is potential for gender norm transformation if, and when, the broader social, economic, and political conditions align. It is important to note that the case studies are not chosen to be representative of the wider Cohort data, but to illuminate the nuance and complex interactions between the influences across the course of a girl's life – providing the basis to draw out commonalities and differences with other girls.

This analysis, therefore, provides a valuable contribution to existing knowledge by enabling critical insight into considering the timing, duration, and scope of interventions that aim to bring about a transformation in gender inequality.

II. REPORT STRUCTURE

The report is structured into three main sections.

- The **first** section draws on the wider literature to conceptualise gender socialisation and provide a framework for understanding where 'glitches' occur and how they are influenced – including a summary of our data.
- This sets the scene for in-depth analysis in the **second** section, drawing from a series of case studies from Benin, Togo, and Uganda, and pulling together analysis across the SSA Cohort. The analysis considers both the types of 'glitches' in the process of gender norm reproduction as well as the influences.
- In the **third** section we present a summary and conclusions and some recommendations, built on our in-depth analysis, for future policy and programming responses, as well as for future research.

1 EXPLORING AND CONCEPTUALISING 'DISRUPTION' OF GENDERED SOCIAL NORMS

1.1 UNDERPINNING INEQUALITY: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDERED SOCIAL NORMS

Gendered social norms and stereotypes underpin and reproduce inequitable practices that ultimately result in girls and boys (and women and men) enjoying differential access to resources, as well as unequal opportunities and outcomes (see Box 3).[16] Conceptualisations of gender differ between contexts: in the Euro-North American contexts, the mid-20th century emancipation of women from the domestic sphere into the world of work was regarded as a great upheaval of gender norms; while in the West African context there is a long history of women's engagement in economic activities and relative financial independence from male partners.[17] In Uganda, gender norms are often intrinsically linked to concepts of morality in social, political, and religious discourse.[18]

Misconceptions that 'gender' relates solely to issues concerning women and girls are being disproven by research looking deeper at how concepts of what it means to be 'feminine' and what it means to be 'masculine' affect social interactions and personal well-being at many different levels. For example, social concepts and expectations of what it means to be 'masculine' are increasingly regarded as one of the root causes of gender-based violence (GBV).[20] Gendered expectations of behaviour can also stunt the development of an individual's identity, forcing them to follow rules that determine which activities they can and cannot take part in, how they express themselves, and what they should look like.

Box 3 Definition of social norms and gender norms[19]

Social norms: *the 'informal rules of the game', influencing behaviour within any social group about what other people do (the typical behaviour) and what one should do (appropriate behaviour). Importantly, social norms carry social implications – i.e. rewards when followed and sanctions when not followed.*

Gender/gendered norms: *a socially constructed set of 'acceptable' feminine/masculine behaviours which individuals are taught to 'perform' usually according to their sex. Failure to 'perform' one's allocated gender carries consequences, whilst adherence is rewarded.*

1.2 GENDER SOCIALISATION AND INFLUENCING

Gender socialisation sees the reproduction of 'acceptable' feminine/masculine behaviours, or gendered social norms, via interaction between various **individual**, **social** and **structural** influences (see Figure 1).[21] Judith Butler, among others, argues that there can be 'slippage' in the reproduction of gendered social norms, wherein these 'acceptable' behaviours are exposed as social constructions – that is, made-up rules, subject to change – rather than being biological truths.[22]

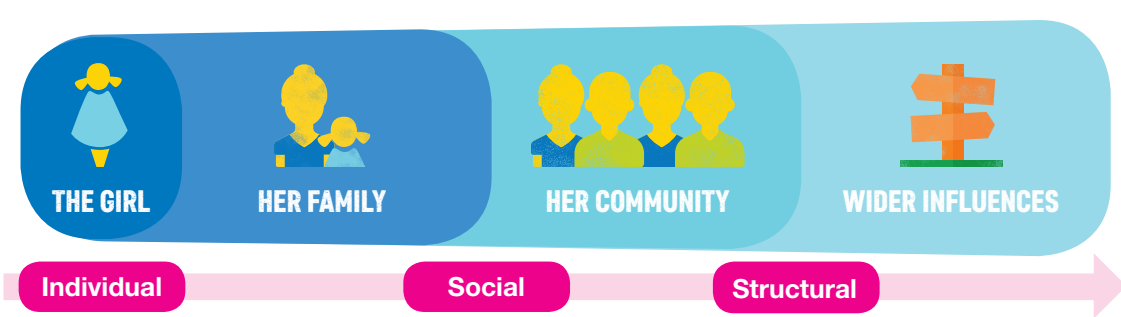
Indeed, studies have shown that individuals behave differently when faced with the same set of expectations, sanctions and rewards.[23] This is dependent on individual, social and structural factors including:

- their own values and beliefs;
- their social status and family values; and
- the availability of resources and opportunities.[24]

These influences are often two-way, with structural changes affecting individual attitudes and behaviours, and individual level changes also influencing wider social dynamics.[25] For example, whilst a household's economic circumstances or social status may influence whether they decide to send a girl to school or not, her attendance also relates to broader structural factors in terms of the policy context, and opportunities in terms of the availability of education and work.[26] The wider literature points to the importance of social institutions, networks and interactions to *"change, usually subtly but sometimes more profoundly, [beliefs]…[as] individuals update their understanding of the norm, and of the costs and benefits of following or resisting the norm, through each meeting."*[27] This is especially important given the life-stage of the girls in the Cohort, as social interactions often broaden out towards adulthood, and family and parental influences become less significant.[28]

While there remain gaps in the understanding of why social norms fade or emerge, what can be observed highlights that they do not change 'cleanly', but often through contested processes which can be both slow or relatively rapid.[29] What people do in practice may change before the norm changes, and, at the same time, their beliefs and attitudes may change before their behaviour.[30] Borrowing from the sociology literature, the concept of 'resistance' can be both individual or collective, as well as spanning from proactive and overt opposition to questioning and objecting.[31] For example, it can involve speaking out or behaving symbolically in opposition to expectations, such as in choices of hairstyle or clothing. Social scientist James Scott asserted that, while *"everyday acts of resistance make no headlines"* they are significant given the resources available to those who are relatively powerless.[32]

Figure 1 Gender socialisation: Spheres of influence in girls' lives



Preparing cassava (a root vegetable) in Benin, 2018

PLAN INTERNATIONAL BENIN

1.3 EXPLORING GENDER SOCIALISATION AND CHANGE IN REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES

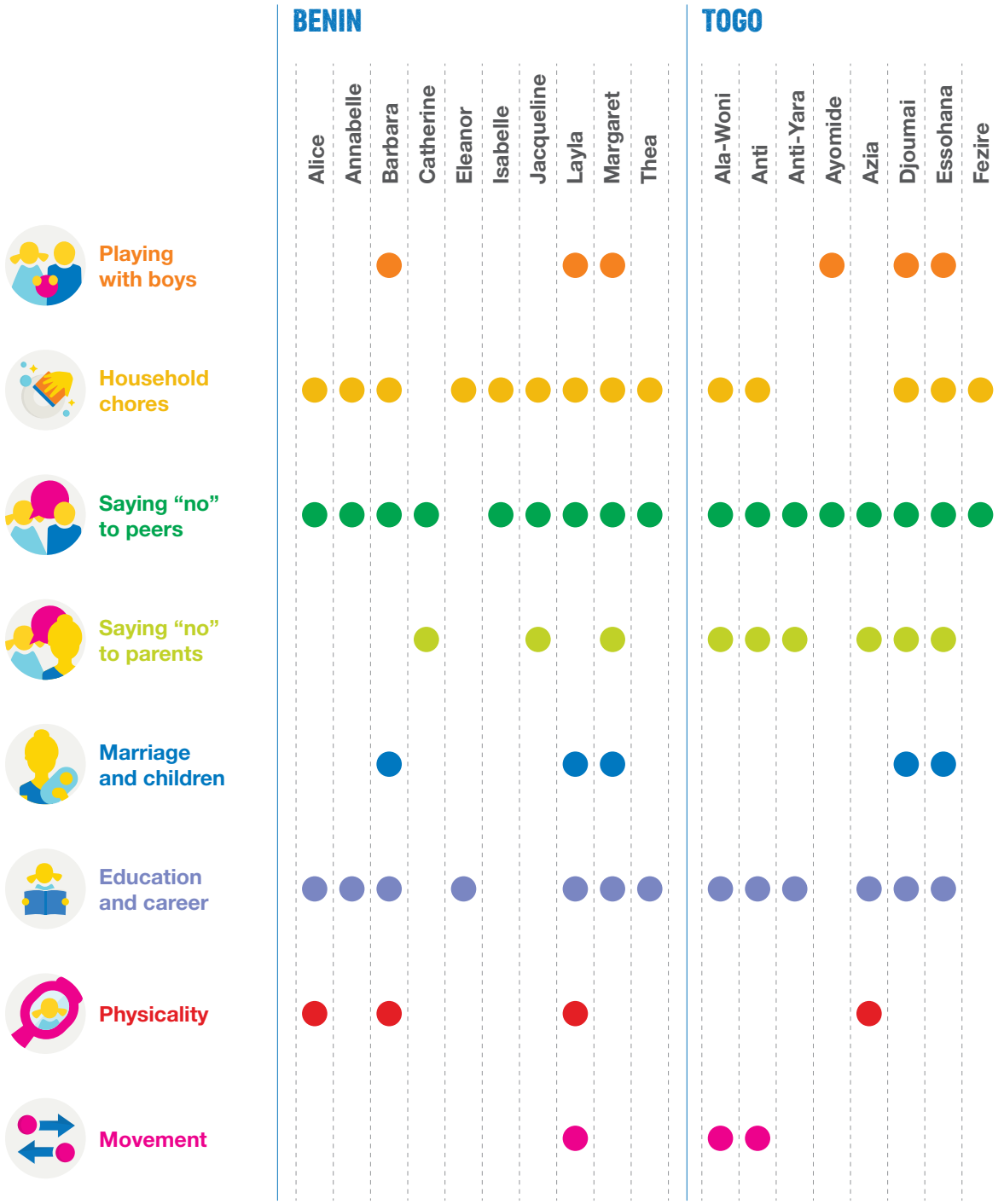
Drawing from the conceptualisation of the gender socialisation process, and its fluctuations, in section 1.2, analysis of the 2017 data identifies that, across the three countries in SSA, every girl demonstrated some type of 'glitch' in the reproduction of gendered social norms in one or more areas of her life. We observed these 'glitches' through **discursive**, **attitudinal**, and **described** behavioural changes articulated by the girls related to expectations of behaviour. These are expressed through, for example, saying "no" to peers or parents – these two dimensions being related but distinct – as well as through 'different' aspirations related to future roles and ambitions, in terms of both education and career as well as marriage and children[33] (see Table 1).

Table 1 What is and is not captured in our data

Typology	What we observe in our data	
Discursive	**Identifying differences**	**"Boys can go where they like, but girls can't."** (Barbara, Benin, 2017)
Attitudinal	**Verbal attitudes**	**"My parents prefer the boys to concentrate on field work and the girls on household tasks. I don't find this fair."** (Essohana, Togo, 2017)
Behavioural	**Described behaviours**	**"As for me, I noticed that that was unfair, so I decided that everyone should get involved."** (Beti's mother, Uganda, 2015)

Typology	What is outside the scope of our data	
Behavioural	**Individual active behaviour**	Observed behavioural change on the individual level
Norm change	**Collective active behaviour**	Observed behavioural change beyond the individual level (family, social network, community etc.)

MAP 2: IDENTIFYING 'GLITCHES' ACROSS THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES



Folami					●		●	●
Ladi					●			●
Larba			●	●	●	●		
Lelem						●		
Mangazia					●	●		●
Nana-Adja			●		●	●		
Nini-Rike			●		●			
Reine			●		●			
Tene								

UGANDA

Amelia			●	●	●	●		●
Beti					●	●	●	
Dembe								
Jane						●		
Joy					●	●	●	
Justine				●	●	●	●	
Miremba			●		●	●		
Namazzi					●	●	●	
Nimisha				●	●	●	●	
Rebecca						●	●	
Sheila				●	●	●	●	
Shifa					●	●		
Sylvia			●		●	●	●	

Our analysis also detects that for the girls in the three SSA Cohort study countries, whilst there is contextual variance in their relative importance, factors influencing 'glitches' in the gender socialisation process cut across the structural, social, and individual spheres of influence. Table 2 provides a summary of the key influences observed – ranging from broader changes in terms of women's representation in political and public life, through to the girl's own priorities. We identify the significance of **Social Level** influences, which is important given the widening of social networks in the Cohort girls' lives as they enter adolescence.

Table 2 Summarising multiple factors of influence

Structural level	**1** Socio-economic situation, changes in economy, and changes in male/female employment. **2** National and regional level policies and laws in terms of education, corporal punishment, and gender equality. **3** Representation of women in public life.
Social level	**1** Parent/carer attitudes and behaviours – the girl's most significant relationships and how they change, contrasting attitudes and behaviours of parents/carers. **2** The presence/absence and behaviour of males in the house including a) adult males and b) male children (brothers/cousins/peers). **3** The use of corporal punishment in the home and/or at school.
Individual level	**1** The girl's priorities and if she recognises how they interact/conflict with each other, including related to education and leisure time. **2** The girl's physical and cognitive maturity and awareness of social norms around her. **3** The girl's repetition of gendered social norms or her level of disruption or general 'disobedience' in other areas of her life.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL UGANDA

Cleaning and cooking at the household, Uganda, 2018

2 LOOKING DEEPER: ANALYSIS OF 'GLITCHES' AND INFLUENCES

In the following sub-sections, and through the analysis of three in-depth case studies – Essohana from Togo, Margaret from Benin, and Beti from Uganda – we explore where and what type of 'glitch' can be observed in the girl's specific context and over time. Our exploration considers several areas where we see evidence both of a strong gendered social norm defining expectations related to girls' behaviour, alongside 'glitches' in these expectations. The sub-sections relate to expectations regarding acceptable or unacceptable behaviour in terms of:

i. **girls' interactions with boys**
ii. **girls' obedience and deference**
iii. **girls' future roles**
iv. **girls' domestic responsibilities.**

We also consider two areas, girls' physicality and their freedom of movement, where there are strong expectations related to what is 'appropriate', but less significant evidence in our data of 'glitches', to explore why this is/is not resisted.

By taking account of our broader primary data, we locate our analysis of 'glitches' within an understanding of what constitutes the 'normal' expectations related to behaviour to give an indication of the prevailing gender norms. This is supported by broader literature, as well as a series of national-level indicators which point to broader gendered outcomes, for example, national education statistics or statistics on GBV. Through the case study examples, we are able to consider girls' experiences – the commonalities, as well as differences – across the broader Cohort. As noted, the case studies have not been selected because they are atypical in any way – we see 'glitches' across all girls in Benin, Togo, and Uganda – but because they provide variation and the opportunity to consider the different potential influences.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL BENIN

A girl working alongside her father in Benin, 2018

PLAN INTERNATIONAL TOGO

A girl playing with her family in Togo, 2018

2.1 GIRLS' INTERACTIONS WITH BOYS

Drawing from longitudinal analysis, the dominant rhetoric related to girls' interaction with boys in Benin, Togo, and Uganda suggests that this is 'unacceptable,' both in relation to perceived 'impropriety' as well as 'danger.' It is evident in the *Real Choices, Real Lives* data that concerns relating to interactions between boys and girls are reflective of persistent gender inequalities. These are often associated with family and care-giver concerns that boys are 'too violent'. However, there is also a strong link with fears that girls and boys being friends will end in pregnancy or 'bad' and 'risky' behaviour. This fear is expressed by eight out of 10 parents in Benin, 12 out of 17 in Togo, and eight out of 13 parents in Uganda.

"I don't think friendship between girls and boys is a good thing as they could develop romantic liaisons…she doesn't have any male friends as our church teaches that this is wrong."
Annabelle's mother, Benin, 2016

"…I don't like that, what mother would? When they're very small there's no problem but as they get older it is not acceptable. Such friendships can lead to pregnancy and crime."
Essohana's mother, Togo, 2016

"…definitely, she has to change her ways and be more careful because if she now plays with any man [she can] get pregnant because she is now a woman, and this worries me."
Amelia's mother, Uganda, 2017

PLAN INTERNATIONAL UGANDA

A girl and her brother undertake work in the fields in Uganda, 2018

Parents and care-givers speak about the social taboo of premarital pregnancy across all three countries not only in relation to morality and reputation, but notably, often in relation to the impact of early pregnancy on the girl's education and career prospects.

> **"I don't think it's a good idea to encourage friendship between boys and girls as it invariably leads to sex and an unplanned pregnancy could ruin a girl's future…"**
> Eleanor's mother, Benin, 2016

Certain parents in our Togo data stand out in discussing how early pregnancy derails the future of *both* boys and girls, and generally appear more inclined to acknowledge the role of girls', and not just boys', in these relationships.

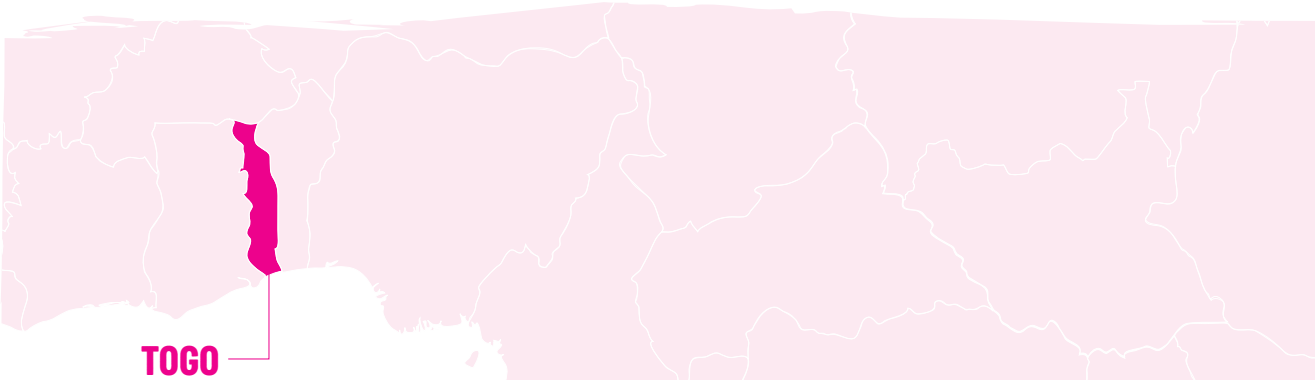
> **"…when they reach adolescence, these friendships become dangerous. This is when children are developing and becoming excited by bad intentions or behaviour like the sexual act and early pregnancies."**
> Ayomide's grandmother, Togo, 2016

Contextualising these parental concerns, the rates of early and unplanned pregnancy are relatively high in all three countries – Uganda in particular. In all three countries, there is high unmet need in terms of contraception or family planning, and low contraceptive prevalence (see Table 3). Additionally, incidents of rape and sexual coercion often make negotiation of contraception impossible: levels of violence, including rape where documented, are high. Concepts rooted in religious morality are prevalent in all three contexts and the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) education the girls report receiving is generally abstinence. Many parents, however, are explicit in wanting their daughters to receive teaching on sexually transmitted infections and HIV prevention.

However, there are several cases where family members – or the girls themselves – assert that even though interactions with boys are considered to be 'unacceptable,' the girl has these friendships anyway. By taking a close look at the case of Essohana from Togo (see Box 4 and Figure 2), we are able to explore the various dynamics related to the gender norm which disapproves of, or prohibits, mixed activities between girls and boys.

Table 3 Indicators related to sexual and reproductive health and rights

Indicator	Benin	Togo	Uganda
Adolescent birth rate aged 15-19 (per 1,000 live births)[34]	86.1	89.1	106.5
Contraceptive prevalence (any method) amongst women married or in a union aged 15-49 (%)	17.9	19.9	29.6
Unmet need for contraception amongst women married or in a union, aged 15-49 (%)	33.1	33.6	29.6
Child marriage (girls married before 18) (%)[35]	26	22	40
Physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in previous 12 months amongst women and girls aged 15-59 (%)[36]	N/A	13	30



BOX 4: ESSOHANA

Togo

Essohana is 11 years old and the third youngest in a household of eight headed by her mother, who in 2017 describes herself as a **"single mother."** Currently living with Essohana are her three older brothers (aged 24, 21, and 17), two older sisters (aged 16 and 14), a younger niece (aged six), and a nephew (aged two). Essohana has older siblings who no longer live in the household, including a sister who works as a nurse in the city, and another who lives with her husband. Essohana's father is absent from the household: **"Decisions are down to me as I have to act as mother and father"** (Essohana's mother, 2017). In 2008, the family left the paternal home and moved into a house paid for by Essohana's mother in the same community. This absence/separation goes unexplained, though Essohana's father appears to have contact with the family – he is mentioned occasionally by Essohana and her mother and participated in the 2011 round of data collection.

Essohana lives in a village in the Central region of Tchaoudjo, Togo. Her mother works as a distiller and vendor of local alcoholic drinks (*Sodabi*) and cakes. The family also earn an income from farming maize and beans, and one of Essohana's adult brothers contributes money to the household from work as a tailor. When mentioned in 2009 and 2015, Esshana's father is also described as an alcohol distiller. Her mother describes herself as the breadwinner for the family: in 2012 when asked how the family earn their living she said, **"I take care of all that. The father is not there."** The family's financial situation has remained relatively stable due to their mixed livelihoods base. However, Essohana's mother reports damage to the family's crops most years due to irregular rainy seasons. Both flooding and periods of drought have led the family to reduce their consumption due to food scarcity.

Essohana and her school-age siblings are currently attending school. However, in 2012, according to Essohana's mother, all but one older brother have repeated at least one grade, and older siblings have dropped out of school before completion due to **"repeated**

HER MOTHER AND BROTHERS HAVE PROHIBITED ESSOHANA FROM PLAYING WITH BOYS AND USE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT TO DISSUADE HER.

failures." When Essohana first began school her mother and teachers complained about her "laziness" and lack of concentration, leading her to repeat Grade One. Since then, however, Essohana has progressed consistently: **"she is cleverer than the others and is doing very well now,"** her mother told us in 2017, and she enjoys school. Essohana's mother left school at 16 in Grade Four, according to her, due to her own laziness. Essohana's father returned to his studies as an adult and passed his BEPC[37] aged 38 with hopes of becoming an administrator. Her mother hopes that Essohana will finish Senior High School and go on to university. It is important to her that Essohana achieves a high level of education before thinking about marriage, and she attributes her own early marriage to her lack of education. She regards early pregnancy and repeated grade failures as potential barriers to Essohana's completion of her studies. Essohana aspires to go to university to become a doctor and to **"do a lot more things than my mother has done."**

The division of labour in the household for Essohana and her siblings follows community expectations of gendered roles, with her brothers helping their mother with agricultural work while Essohana and her sisters carry out domestic tasks. According to her 2017 interview, Essohana's mother thinks that this division of labour is fair as **"it's been this way for a long time."** Essohana's household responsibilities have increased with age and she is critical of the contradiction that agriculture is 'male' work, yet females must help with farming as well as doing all the domestic work.

Essohana confides in her mother – her most significant relationship. Her favourite part of the day is the evening when she and her family discuss their day. Her mother and brothers have prohibited Essohana from playing with boys and use corporal punishment to dissuade her. Despite this, she continues to have both male and female friends, but only plays with boys at school, where her family cannot see her.

FIGURE 2: ESSOHANA

Timeline of 'glitches' (*when* and *where*)

Playing with boys

Household chores

Saying "no" to peers

Saying "no" to parents

Marriage and children

Education and career

"I don't play with boys; I don't know why." [discursive – noticed a difference]

"I don't play with boys at school like in the house. We girls, we play the game of *ampe* and sometimes the *ware*. Most times, the boys play football and we don't know how to play and sometimes they are violent." [discursive – noticed a difference]

"Boys don't work as much at home as girls do." [discursive – noticed a difference] **"I like washing dishes and studying with my sister.**
I don't like going to the farm."

"My parents expect me and my sisters to do jobs in the house and my brothers to work in the field. I think that's good because me and my sisters aren't as strong as our brothers and couldn't do the cultivating in the fields."
Do you do more than others in the household,? If so, why is that?
"No, my sisters work much harder than me." [discursive – noticed a difference]

2013 **2014**

Do you have any friends at school?
"Yes, four girlfriends and five boyfriends."
What do you do with your friends at school?
"We have fun, we share our food together...We do not accept that girls and boys play together in our community; it is at school that I have fun with my boyfriends but not at home, because if mum sees me having fun with the boys she beats me saying 'have you ever seen the girls playing with boys?'" [behavioural – described behaviour]

"My parents and big brothers don't like me playing with boys, they tell me off and sometimes smack me if I do. So, at school, I like playing with my friends who are boys but not at home." [behavioural – described behaviour]

"Yes I have some friends who are boys, Assam and Lidao, they live in my area, they help me with the really hard exercises. I don't know if this will change or not, but my mum and dad do not like it at all that I keep company with boys, they say that boys aren't any good." [behavioural – described behaviour]

"Yes the men and boys do work in the fields while the women and girls do work in the house. I don't find this fair because the women and girls also have to work in the fields to help the men but the men don't like to help with the household tasks at all." [attitudinal – verbal attitude]
Imagine you were a boy, would your typical school day be any different?
"Yes, because boys don't have to do household chores before school; while I am washing the plates, my brothers have already set off for school." [discursive – noticed a difference]
Do girls have to do chores at school? More than boys?
Do you think this is fair?
"No it's not fair but the girls don't have a choice because the boys don't like doing domestic chores." [attitudinal – verbal attitude]

"My parents prefer the boys to concentrate on field work and the girls on household tasks. I don't find this fair, the boys could also do some housework as we girls have to go to the fields to help with the planting and the harvest." [attitudinal – verbal attitude]

"It wouldn't be hard for me to say no because I don't like people trying to force me to do things I don't want to." [attitudinal – verbal attitude/behavioural – described behaviour]

"I would refuse to do it and calmly explain my reasons." [attitudinal – verbal attitude/behavioural – described behaviour]

"My life will be different from my mother's because I want to become a doctor and not a seller of a local drink. I will do a lot more things than my mother has done." [attitudinal – verbal attitude]

"it's better to finish your studies before thinking about marriage." [attitudinal – verbal attitude]

2015 **2016** **2017**

PLAN INTERNATIONAL TOGO

A family gather in their compound in Togo, 2018

2.1.1 How and why 'glitches' emerge

In the case of Essohana, we see a number of interesting dynamics related to her friendships with boys and how these change over time. When Essohana was eight she described a variation between her behaviour at home and at school: **"I don't play with boys at school like in the house"** (2013). She offered two explanations for her lack of play with boys at school; initially echoing the gendered social norm that boys are too violent to play with, then pointing to the fact that boys and girls play different games: **"the boys play football and we don't know how to play."** Essohana's attitude towards playing with boys started to shift from here and aged nine she said, **"I don't play with boys; I don't know why"** (2014). Although she does not describe any change in her behaviour, continuing to adhere to the gendered expectation, she also appears to (indirectly) question why this is expected of her, acknowledging that not playing with boys was not a conscious decision made by her. By 2015, Essohana openly reported having, and playing with, male friends (as well as female ones) despite being aware of the gendered social norms which prohibit this, stating, **"we do not accept that girls and boys play together in our community."** Moreover, this is despite her mother's use of corporal punishment to dissuade her from deviating from this norm: **"if mom sees me having fun with the boys she beats me saying 'have you ever seen the girls playing with boys?'"** Rather than adhering to the social norm and obeying her mother, Essohana instead hides her disruptive behaviour: **"it is at school that I have fun with my boy friends but not at home."** As she begins to enter early adolescence, Essohana, aged 10, persistently deviates from her family's wishes that she should avoid boys, explaining, **"my mum and dad do not like it at all that I keep company with boys, they say that boys aren't any good"** (2016). Despite their continued use of corporal punishment to prevent her (**"my parents and big brothers don't like me playing with boys, they tell me off and sometimes smack me if I do"**), she continues to do what she enjoys but restricts it to one space. In 2017, she explains, **"So, at school, I like playing with my friends who are boys but not at home."**

On the **Individual Level**, Essohana demonstrates a high level of agency in prioritising what she wants to do over her parents' disapproval and physical punishment, as well as defying the social norms in her community. Here, in 2017, she explains that people say a girl **"shouldn't be friendly with boys, she should be quiet. People in my area also think that girls shouldn't mix with boys or they will not work well at home or at school."** Essohana is therefore not simply disobeying her parents, but rather is making a conscious decision that she disagrees with them and the gendered social norms which seek to limit or prevent friendships and play between girls and boys. She admitted that she hides her friendships with boys from her family. However, she also stated that in general she would feel confident saying "no" to her parents' requests if she disagreed with them: **"I would refuse to do it and calmly explain my reasons"** (Essohana, 2017).

While Essohana appears to be mature in her developed sense of principles and awareness of the expectations of others around her, in 2017, aged 11, she and her mother reported little sign of physical maturity or the onset of puberty.[38] This is potentially significant on the **Social Level**, as parental prohibition of male-female friendships is usually attributed to the assumption that this will lead to pre-marital sexual relationships and unwanted

pregnancies (as discussed in section 2.1 above). Only one girl in the SSA Cohort, Amelia, has starting menstruating: **"I was surprised and scared because she is still young"** (Amelia's mother, Uganda, 2017),[39] and most girls have similarly not yet experienced significant physical changes related to puberty. They are, in this sense, still regarded as children: **"She doesn't know anything about periods. She remains a child like the other girls her age in the community"** (Barbara's mother, Benin, 2017).

Whilst a number of parents and carers expressed a sense that mixed gendered activities were still 'acceptable', this leniency is conditional on age: **"I think it's a bad thing for boys and girls to be friends although it does vary depending on their age"** (Ayomide's mother, Togo, 2017); **"When Rebecca goes beyond this age, I will not permit it at all to play among groups of boys"** (Rebecca's father, Uganda, 2017); and **"Yes, she has friends from school and she has friends who are boys. I'm not bothered about this for now, as they are still children"** (Layla's mother, Benin, 2017). At the same time, as girls and boys get older the risks that their relationship will become inappropriate, or, possibly more significantly, *perceptions* that their relationship is becoming inappropriate, increase (as discussed in section 2.1). Essohana's lack of physical maturity could, therefore, be influencing her confidence in continuing to have and play with male friends, due to her own awareness that this is more of an issue for older girls. Or, it may suggest that while her family *say* she is prohibited from playing with boys they do not impose this rule as strictly as they would, were she more mature.

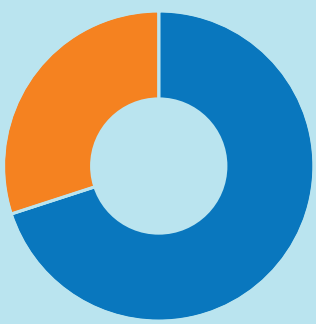
Similarly, on a **Social Level**, Essohana's experience of playing with her older brothers at home may have influenced her progression to playing with boys at school. Indeed, a number of other girls who similarly deviate from this gendered social norm also report playing with their brothers and male cousins at home and in the community. The distinction made by Essohana in the space where play with boys is 'appropriate' switches from home (appropriate) and school (inappropriate) in 2013, to home and community (inappropriate) and school (appropriate) in 2017. By 2017, her brothers themselves inflict corporal punishment on her when they see her playing with boys. School is described as a space where gendered expectations of behaviour may not be as strictly enforced by other girls, who, like Essohana, ensure that their mixed-gendered activities are undertaken out of sight of their parents. For example, in 2017, Barbara in Benin stated, **"[boys and girls] play football together at school"** and Djoumai in Togo said, **"If my parents saw me playing with boys, they would tell me off."** Some girls, however, report feeling judged by peers and teachers at school if they mix with boys: **"I can have friends who are boys but the problem with this school is that when others see you playing with boys, they think of other things"** (Nimisha, Uganda, 2017).

On the **Social Level** in the home, Essohana's close relationship with her mother may also be influencing her 'positive deviance' from this gendered social norm. Her mother is the family breadwinner and describes herself as "single," saying that, **"decisions are down to me as I have to act as mother and father"** (2017). While women in Togo and Benin traditionally have strong economic participation in both agricultural work and trade – particularly the latter – Essohana's mother's assertive financial independence from her husband stands out (see further discussion in Box 5). She is an example of a mother or female carer who herself deviates from social norms and expectations of

behaviour by being the family breadwinner and appearing to reject her husband's help: on a number of occasions she emphasises the fact that she is financially independent from him. In this way, while her mother is against male-female friendships, she may be influencing Essohana's understanding of gender roles and their potential fluidity on a broader level. Cases discussed below (see, for example, Beti – section 2.4), where both mothers, or female carers, and girls demonstrate attitudes and behaviours which represent 'glitches' in the same social norms, explore this influence further.

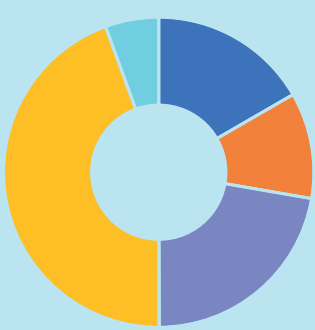
Box 5 Dynamics related to economic decision-making in Togo and Benin

Economic Decision-making Benin



Seven out of 10 households in the Benin Cohort, including all three male respondents, said that husband and wife share the economic decision-making. Alice's father, for example, said that he and his wife share the decision-making but thinks that this is not the norm in his community: **"Decisions about spending in the family are taken jointly by my wife and me. In the community, I don't think that women are able to express an opinion on how money is spent except in a few rare households. Here, men don't think that women should have any say in how their money is spent. It's the culture"** (2017). The remaining three households are female-headed (two widowed, one separated) and the girls' mothers say they make all decisions independently.

Economic Decision-making Togo



In Togo, the situation appears to be more complex. Just three out of 17 households say that decision-making is shared between males and females, although the prevalent description of relations is that women have more say than in the past. This is attributed to broader social changes – for example, 'rights', and vocal women in the media – but men still make the final decision. In Larba's household her mother described a different structure, **"My husband makes decisions about his spending and I make decisions about mine"** (2017). The only other household where decision-making is female-led is in Mangazia's home where the father, as in Essohana's house, is absent. Her mother highlighted how her situation deviates from the norm: **"It's me who makes the decisions, as their father is not here I make the decisions by myself. Usually, in the community, it's the men who spend the money and the women have no say in the matter. I have never seen a woman in the community complain"** (Mangazia's mother, Togo, 2017).

2.2 GIRLS' OBEDIENCE AND DEFERENCE

We observe that there are underlying expectations across the three countries around girls' behaviour in terms of voice – with how speaking out and acting autonomously is viewed – linking with broader social structures and social dynamics. Generally, there is a strong expectation that girls should behave in a way that shows their deference to older male family members (often to older females also) as well as conforming to being 'obedient' and not demonstating agency.

> **"When she has discipline, respects the community people, and when she is an obedient child who is not disobedient; these make her a good girl child."**
> Namazzi's mother, Uganda, 2016

> **"[Girls should] go to school, help parents, stay quiet and perform household tasks."**
> Fezire, Togo, 2015

> **"…some girls don't respect older people at all, people insult them and detest them and won't let them in their houses."**
> Eleanor, Benin, 2016

In 2017, the girls were asked if they would say "no" to their peers if asked to do something they did not want to do. They were then asked if they would say "no" if it were their parents or carers asking. In terms of analysing a girl's level of voice (or to some degree implied agency) the responses to this question were usually limited to the discursive and hypothetical – *"I would say 'no'"* – without giving examples of this behaviour in action. However, saying "no" whether to peers or parents and care-givers; expressing reluctance to doing certain things; or simply "doing what she wanted" were all instances of apparent 'glitches' in the expectation of girls' obedience, and were expressed frequently across the Benin, Togo, and Uganda data. The degree to which this was the case was further influenced by whether the girl was interacting with peers or her family members (see Box 6).

Box 6 Comparison of saying "no" to peers and parents

Alice, Benin, 2017

Peers
"No, it wouldn't be difficult as they have no authority over me."

Parents
"I would make an effort to do it as they are my parents and I must obey them."

Mangazia, Togo, 2017

Peers
"Not at all, I would simply say 'no'. It's not good to force someone to do something they don't want to."

Parents
"I would do what my parents asked me to do because I must respect and obey my parents and do what they tell me to do."

Rebecca, Uganda, 2017

Peers
"I can refuse."

Parents
"I can do it since it is an elderly person who has told me to do it."

Box 7 Exploring saying "no" in *Real Choices, Real Lives*

There is a marked difference between the Benin and Togo Cohorts and the Uganda Cohort in the responses to the questions related to saying "no" to peers or parents. The girls in Uganda appear to express much higher levels of voice (and, in some cases, suggestions of agency) with regard to refusing their parents and acting on their own conscience than the girls in Benin and Togo. In Uganda,10 out of 13 girls express their confidence in saying "no" to their parents or carers compared to two out of 10, and five out of 15 girls in Benin and Togo, respectively. In Benin, Catherine said that she would tell her brothers to do what her parents asked (rather than doing it herself) and Annabelle indicated that she would say "no", including to elders (2017). In Togo, Azia said she would "lie" and pretend she had been ill (2017).

In Uganda, a number of the girls interpret their saying "no" as an independent moral decision. For example, Justine commented, **"I don't do anything [my parents ask me] against my heart and can't be forced to do things I don't want to, whatever I do, it's my decision"** (2017). Shifa commented that she would tell her parents **"that it is not good to do"** if they asked her to do something she did not want to do (2017). On the cultural **Social Level**, this could suggest that the importance of maintaining moral integrity outweighs any duty to obey parents/carers, and on the **Individual Level**, that the girls have a well-developed sense of identity in their ability to recognise instances where their elders may be requesting they do something they regard as 'wrong.' On the **Structural Level**, the wider religious shifts in Uganda and the increased degree of influence on public discourse around 'morality' in recent years may be significant. This is an area of notable difference between the Uganda and Benin/Togo data and requires further investigation especially as much of the wider literature focuses on girls' lack of voice (and agency) in East Africa.

There were also observable differences between the girls' degree of saying "no" in Uganda compared to Benin and Togo (see Box 7). Whilst it is necessary to exercise caution with analysis based on (often) hypothetical situations, our interest here is from the perspective of understanding, through the girls' explanations, how they would navigate saying "no" or expressing opinions, and the relationship of this to considerations around voice and agency.[40]

It was evident across all three countries, despite the 'glitches' we observed, that the social norm and expectation that all children, not just girls, show deference to their elders (especially male elders) is strong. For a large number of girls, the need to obey parents and carers overrides their own opinions, wants, and principles. This was often linked to the strong prevalence of corporal punishment (explored further in Box 8 below). Indeed, the wider literature acknowledges that across many African societies there is an expectation that *"young people"* are *"deferential, obedient and silent."*[41] Interestingly, a study by ODI highlights how the hegemonic status of the 'male' which relies often on the deferential behaviour of others – usually younger family members and females – is an example of the *"precariousness of power."*[42] That is, of how gendered norms are socially constructed and, therefore, how they have the potential to be dismantled.

2.2.1 How and why 'glitches' emerge

Again, by looking closely at the case of Essohana (see Case Study Box 4 and Figure 2), we are able to explore dimensions related to saying "no." For example, through Essohana's explanation as to *why* she would speak up, we see an awareness of herself and her principles as well as previous experience in this situation. When asked about her response to peers she said, **"It wouldn't be hard for me to say no because I don't like people trying to force me to do things I don't want to"** (2017). Likewise, when asked if she would say "no" to her parents, Essohana described *how* she would speak up, **"I would refuse to do it and calmly explain my reasons"** (2017). This is reflective of a thought process, which may be linked to internalising and developing a personalised set of principles.

Just two other girls in the Togo Cohort gave a similar response to this question: **"I would refuse and explain that my heart wouldn't be easy if I did it"** (Anti, Togo, 2017), and: **"I wouldn't do it, but would explain calmly and nicely why I couldn't do it"** (Djoumai, Togo, 2017).

The girls' method of dealing with this situation is to "explain" their refusal to parents, which indicates a communicative parent-child relationship where the girl feels able to voice her opinion, rather than feeling restricted to absolute compliance with parental wishes. At the **Social Level**, this is an important dynamic which can facilitate her development of an identity and principles, for which adolescence is a crucial period.

Box 8 How corporal punishment restricts girls' agency

In all countries, the use of corporal punishment remains prominent, despite the introduction of legislature and programming to deter its practice. For example, national laws prohibiting corporal punishment in the home and in schools have existed in Benin since 2015 and in Togo since 2017. In Uganda, whilst corporal punishment is unlawful in school it has not been outlawed at home – a bill was put forward but has not been passed. See Annex 2.

It is evident from both the girls' reports of experiencing corporal punishment, at home and at school, and from parental reports of *when* and *why* they carry it out, that it is often framed as a regrettable, but accepted and effective, method of teaching children how to behave. The justification for using corporal punishment on both girls and boys is often focused on gendered social norms relating to safety and acceptable behaviours. Across the SSA Cohort, we see the ways in which corporal punishment impedes girls from expressing agency, voicing their opinions, and acting on their own accord.

> Would you say "no" to your parents if they asked you to do something you did not want to do? **"I would do it or they would smack me."**
> Ladi, Togo, 2017

> Would you say "no" to your friends if they asked you to do something you did not want to do? **"I can refuse because if we continue and do such a thing the teacher may beat us."**
> Joy, Uganda, 2017

Further, and again at the **Social Level**, Essohana's close relationship with her mother, who describes herself as **"both a mother and a father"** (2017) to her children due to the absence of her husband, may be important in this dynamic. In line with other literature, the maternal relationship is often significant (this is explored also in section 2.4.1 below). We see this elsewhere across the Cohort – for example, Jacqueline in Benin, like almost all the girls, said she would not find it hard to say "no" to peers, but at home, **"If my mother asked me I would tell her I was tired, but if it was my father I wouldn't say anything or he would hit me. Mummy is kinder than Daddy, he is often strict with us"** (2017). Jacqueline's response raises a number of interesting points:

i. she describes a contrasting relationship with her mother and father wherein she feels a) confident to refuse her mother but b) unable to express herself honestly with her father out of fear
ii. she reveals the use of corporal punishment in suppressing disobedience.

As noted in the introduction, fear of violent repercussions, and the social norm that elders – and, in particular, males – must be obeyed, are the two most common reasons reported by the girls as to why they would not say "no" to their parents. Of course, this is not only about gender but is also generational – boys too should not say "no" to elders. However, it is significant in the context of considering voice and agency, in that it highlights that the barrier for many girls from being able to translate expressing themselves and being heard into decisive action is often linked to fear of violence (see Box 8).

Examining the case of Margaret in Benin (see Case Study Box 9 and Figure 3), who said in 2017, **"I would make the effort to do it because I wouldn't want my parents to think of me as disobedient,"** we are able to further explore the ways in which families reinforce expectations of behaviour. Through this example, we also see that disruption of social and gendered norms is not a linear process. In 2014, Margaret's father expressed concern about his daughter's lack of adherence to his expectations of her behaviour: **"When I observe my daughter Margaret, I think of moving her to Cotonou, to stay with my senior sister. Because when I speak to her, she doesn't listen, she's not obedient and she doesn't fear me. When she was on holidays at my sister's home in Cotonou, she used to be very obedient and nice."** It is clear that the expectation of deference from girls is very strong: Margaret's father considers his daughter's "fear" of him to be desirable. Three years later, Margaret is in fact sent to live with her aunt, 'because she was not obeying her parents' (Interviewer's note, Margaret's family interview, 2017).

The transferral of girls to extended family, to 'reinforce' social norms and put an end to disruptive behaviour, is a method used across the three contexts at varying ages and at this point is most evident in the Benin Cohort. It highlights the significance, on a **Social Level**, of the extended family network and is embedded in cultural traditions around 'child fostering' which is especially strong in West African societies.[43]

Indeed, other studies have highlighted that, whilst this can arise on account of various factors – including illness, death, parent's divorce or separation – it is often a process of "education and socialisation".[44] It is also a practice that focuses on girls rather than boys: with a study in Benin highlighting that in some locations nearly four times the number of girls were sent to the wider family for fostering compared to boys.[45] Our data from Benin also highlights that beyond reinforcing gendered expectations around behaviour, it is interesting that aunts and female cousins are also often

‘used’ to share information, especially about subjects such as menstruation and sexual and reproductive health. These are subjects that are often ‘taboo’ or considered inappropriate and too uncomfortable for direct parent-daughter communication.

Isabelle from Benin is, like Margaret, living with her aunt in 2017, in a household where her uncle works away from home. She was sent by her mother, who said in 2016 that Isabelle was no longer listening to her and would hit her with a stick as punishment. In 2017, both Isabelle and Margaret demonstrated a shift in their behaviour, evident in both their own and their families’ descriptions. Isabelle, for example, said, **“I would say no if a group of children asked me, but I couldn’t say no to an adult as I’ve always been taught to do what an adult asks”**, and her aunt said, **“She is respectful and does what she’s asked to.”** Margaret commented, **“I would make the effort to do it because I wouldn’t want my parents to think of me as disobedient”**. Margaret’s aunt observed, **“She is headstrong and used to fight all the time with her small brothers. Since she has been here, everything’s going well; she no longer has anyone to fight with as [her female cousin] is older than her and much calmer.”** In these two cases sending of girls to live with extended family members appears to have the desired effect: apparently instilling ‘good’ and obedient behaviour and reversing the girls’ ‘disruption’ of these social norms. If and when Margaret and Isabelle move back to their parents’ homes, it will be interesting to track whether their behaviour shifts once more, or if this has ‘stamped out’ the beginnings of their disruption.

Fostering does not always appear to have the desired effect: in 2014, Layla also from Benin was similarly sent away to her uncle and aunt for being **“too capricious”** in the hope that her **“uncles and aunts (could) hold her with more rigour.”** But on her return to the family in 2017, and despite promising to **“make an effort to do whatever they (her parents) asked,”** her mother continued to express concern over Layla’s behaviour.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL UGANDA

Classmates in the school playground in Uganda, 2018

BOX 9: MARGARET

Benin

Margaret is 11 years old and the second eldest child in a family of six: she has an older sister, aged 16, two younger brothers, nine and six, and a younger sister, aged two. Until 2017, Margaret was living with her mother, father, and four siblings. Over the years members of Margaret's extended family have also lived in the home: in 2011, her paternal aunt and uncle, in 2013 her aunt, aged 21, with twin babies, until 2013 her paternal grandfather lived with the family, and between 2014-2016 a female cousin stayed with them. In 2017, Margaret was sent to live with her paternal aunt, uncle, and 13-year-old female cousin because 'she was not obeying her parents' (Interviewer observation, 2017).

Margaret's family lives in a village in the South-Western Couffo department of Benin. Both Margaret's mother and father contribute to the household income: her mother as a farmer and seller of cornmeal, and her father as a seasonal farmer and carpenter/joiner. In Margaret's aunt's home, where she is currently living, both her aunt and uncle work: her aunt as a seller, and her uncle as a primary school teacher who, having recently passed the relevant exams, hopes to become a school inspector. Margaret's family have reported facing financial difficulties most years due to crop failure caused by either heavy rains or drought and, in 2014, they further struggled with expenses relating to the death of Margaret's grandfather. At times neither Margaret's mother nor father have had a stable income and have reduced the family's consumption to deal with financial difficulties and food scarcity.

All of Margaret's siblings and cousins who are of school age are attending school. However, both Margaret and her older sister (16) have repeated primary school grades. Her sister

IN 2017, MARGARET MOVED TO LIVE WITH HER PATERNAL AUNT, UNCLE, AND 13-YEAR-OLD FEMALE COUSIN BECAUSE "SHE WAS NOT OBEYING HER PARENTS".

repeated Grade Three, while Margaret repeated Grade Two and then Grade Three twice, which means she is three years behind for her age. Both of Margaret's brothers are in the correct grade for their age. Although her mother and father are educated to primary school level, they describe themselves as illiterate and are unable to help their children with homework. Margaret's family hope that she will succeed in finishing her BAC[46] and regard potential barriers to her achieving this as: lack of financial means; lack of interest in studying; pregnancy; and access to a secondary school. Both Margaret's mother and father discuss the importance of girls' education primarily in relation to their capacity to be able to look after their parents in the future. Margaret would like to go to university and thinks her parents want her to be a midwife or policewoman. She herself would like to be rich, a nun, and unmarried with no children.

In both homes, parental and aunt, the division of labour is strict and according to gendered expectations of roles, with women performing all household chores apart from in exceptional circumstances such as illness and pregnancy. Margaret and her older sister are allocated household chores while her brothers are not. Her father regards older females teaching girls to do household tasks as preparation for their future, as he commented in 2016, **"they train them and then they marry."**

Margaret is closer to her father than her mother, she confides in him and says she admires him **"the most"** because he gives her things **"straight away"** when she asks. Margaret has a number of female friends and says she does not play with boys. She describes boys as bullies and reports being warned not to play with them for fear they may hurt her.

FIGURE 3: MARGARET

Timeline of 'glitches' (*when* and *where*)

Household chores

"I like sweeping the room of my grandfather, my mother and my uncle and the fold of sheep." [acceptant]

"Our mother gives us our jobs but the boys refuse to do any domestic chores so it's me and my sister who have to do it." [discursive – notices a difference]

Saying "no" to peers

Father: "When I observe my daughter Margaret, I think of moving her to Cotonou, to stay with my senior sister. Because when I speak to her, she doesn't listen, she's not obedient and she doesn't fear me. When she was on holidays in my sister's home at Cotonou, she used to be very obedient and nice." [behavioural – described behaviour]

Saying "no" to parents

Father: "Margaret is not a very well-behaved girl, she doesn't obey us, she is headstrong and is afraid of no-one." [behavioural – described behaviour]

Marriage and children

"When I'm grown up I will be a policeman in order to defend my parents." [attitudinal – verbal attitude]

Education and career

"I would like to look like a policeman who would catch the thieves who steal our goats." [attitudinal – verbal attitude]

2011 2012 2013

"No my junior brothers are too young for domestic chores, but other boys of my age do domestic chores too. No, it's not in all the homes. In many homes they don't do anything, they just play." [discursive – noticed a difference]

How [do you] feel about the type/amount of chores [you are] responsible for?

"Sometimes I cry when I don't want to do it. No, I always do it in the end. I realise that it's not too much for me, but sometimes I wish I could have more time to play." [behavioural – described behaviour, discursive – noticed a difference]

"My parents don't expect anything from me, I can get up and go to school without doing anything. My sister is the one who does all the domestic chores, my brothers are all young. I don't think it's good, I should start to help my big sister around the house." [discursive – noticed a difference]

What chores do you do at home? Who tells you to do these?

"I don't do anything in the house. I don't do the tasks my mother gives me, I do what I want." [behavioural – described behaviour]

"Yes, I think there is a difference; men cultivate the land while women do all the domestic chores, fetch water, go to the mill and sell products. Girls also do these things, but boys do nothing." [discursive – noticed a difference] **"I think it's fair because it's the duty of women and girls to be responsible for domestic chores."** [acceptant]

"It wouldn't be difficult for me to say 'no' if it was against the rules like stealing money." [attitudinal – verbal attitude]

"When I grow up I will be a nurse, but I won't marry because I want to become a nun because I like them." [attitudinal – verbal attitude]

"I would like to be rich. I want to be a nun as I don't want to get married or have children." [attitudinal – verbal attitude]

"I would make the effort to do [what they asked] because I wouldn't want my parents to think of me as disobedient." [acceptant]

"I would like to be rich. I want to be a nun as I don't want to get married or have children." [attitudinal – verbal attitude] **"I would like to go to university…I think [my parents] would like me to be a health worker, a midwife…Yes, they do [have different expectations for my brother]. They want my brother to be a policeman. I think this is a good idea, we would each have our own job."** [discursive – noticed a difference, acceptant] **"It's very important for boys and girls to go to school so they can find a job and be independent."** [attitudinal – verbal attitude]

"I hope to go to university…When I grow up, I will be a nurse, but I won't marry because I want to become a nun because I like them." [attitudinal – verbal attitude]

2014 **2015** **2016** **2017**

2.3 GIRLS' FUTURE ROLES

Expectations for the girls' future roles and aspirations is an area which particularly demonstrates the apparent contrast between wider societal norms and what a girl's immediate family hope for her. There are strong expectations that a girl will marry and have children, which though often viewed as a high priority, or inevitability, is not necessarily regarded as an alternative to her education or career.

> **"I would like her to be a nurse, but things are different for boys than girls. Girls are expected to marry and then pregnancy changes things."**
> Rebecca's mother, Uganda, 2008

There are also clear gendered norms relating to the types of work that girls should do compared to boys.

> **"The boy is expected to be a doctor."** How do you feel if your expectation is not the same as for your brother? **"I feel good because when he is a doctor and I am a teacher, when I fall sick he is able to treat me and I can teach him."**
> Shifa, Uganda, 2017

This is reflected in the broader context, where females continue to marry earlier than males, though research suggests that increased access to education is delaying the age girls and women are entering into their first marriage. Figure 4 demonstrates this, highlighting the declining fertility rates and the disparity in the type of work engaged in by males and females across Benin, Togo, and Uganda.

When **talking about the future**, the SSA Cohort girls often present 'glitches' to gendered norms concerning the expected roles they will fulfil both in relation to the age at which they want to marry, as well as hopes for what they want to achieve before marriage. They often aspire to future roles that are "something different" from their mothers' – a view often reiterated by the mothers themselves – as well as from the experiences of others around them. This is expressed in relation not only to their education and career – wanting more wealth and different jobs – but also in relation to to whether they wish to marry and have a family, and if so, how many children they would have.

> **"When I'm a grown-up, I will be a school mistress. I will live in a beautiful house and be married to a doctor with six children; two boys and four girls… My mother sells things, but I will be a teacher. She lives in a clay house, but my house will be made of bricks. My mother is poor, but I will be rich."**
> Layla, Benin, 2017

> **"My life will be different from my mother's because I will have my own shop which I will manage whereas my mother sells sand that she collects, to other people. I will get married like my mother, but I won't have lots of children like her."**
> Djoumai, Togo, 2017

In this case, the 'glitches' are better conceived in relation to girls pursuing something 'outside', or 'beyond' the 'norm', both in terms of what they have observed, and – to some extent – what is considered appropriate and possible for them.

Figure 4 Marriage and employment statistics

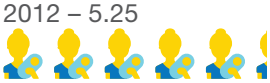
Average number of children born per woman

Benin

1996 – 6.28[47]

2006 – 5.58

2012 – 5.25



2018 – 4.84

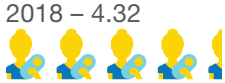
Togo

1996 – 5.67[48]

2006 – 5.12

2012 – 4.73

2018 – 4.32

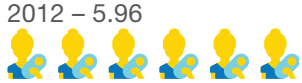


Uganda

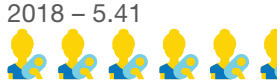
1996 – 6.99[49]

2006 – 6.51

2012 – 5.96



2018 – 5.41



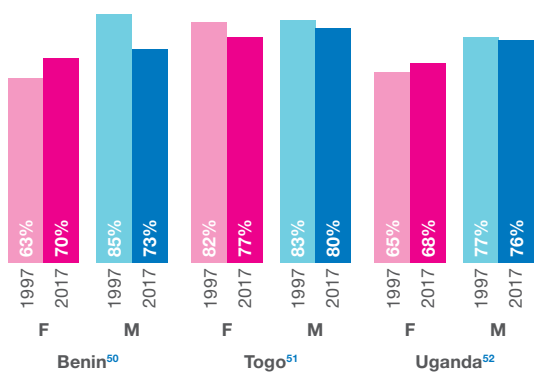
Median age of first marriage for women[56, 57, 58]

BENIN	TOGO	UGANDA
19.8	20	18.7

Median age of first marriage for men

BENIN	TOGO	UGANDA
25.5	26	23.3

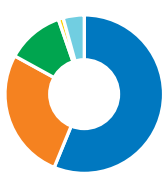
Labour force participation



Employment type[53, 54, 55]

Female employment (Benin)

Female employment (Togo)



Female employment (Uganda)

Male employment (Benin)

Male employment (Togo)

Male employment (Uganda)

Sales/Service · Agriculture · Skilled Manual/Trade · Professional · Other

2.3.1 How and why 'glitches' emerge

Until 2015, Margaret (Case Study Box 9 and Figure 3) expressed a consistent aspiration to become a police officer (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015).[59] Her motivation for this is orientated around her family: **"when I'm grown up I will be a policeman in order to defend my parents."** On the **Social Level**, Margaret's close relationship with her father, her admiration of him, as well as his clear authority in the home is a potential influence on her aspirations. In 2009, Margaret's father said that he would like his daughter to become a policewoman while her mother expressed the hope that Margaret will become a midwife. By 2017, however, when asked if she thinks her parents have different aspirations for her and her brothers' future, Margaret confirmed that they do, and her desired profession is 'given' to her brother: **"I think they would like me to be a health worker, a midwife…Yes, they do. They want my brother…to be a policeman."**

In 2016, Margaret's attitude towards her future starts to shift towards studying at university and becoming a nurse. On the **Social Level**, her parents have maintained high expectations for Margaret's education, hoping that she will complete her BAC[60] and go on to university. Her aunt whom she now lives with agrees, saying, **"I hope that my children, Margaret and [Margaret's female cousin] stay at school until university level and then travel and go abroad."** On the **Structural Level**, Benin's government has made improvements in raising school enrolment and completion rates in the country, dedicating at least four percent of its annual GDP to education since 2009.[61] While tertiary level attainment rates in Benin have also increased, suggesting a widening of opportunities to attend university, and as nine out of 10 of the girls and their families in the Benin Cohort aspire to, disaggregation of the data shows a huge disparity in terms of gender, region, and urban/rural attainment (see Figure 5). While government investment in education may be influencing the higher education aspirations of the girls, these may remain unobtainable with economic, regional, and gender disparities continuing to block access for rural females.

Figure 5 The changing education context in Benin (Couffo Region)

While the national average of 15-24-year-old females attaining tertiary education rose from 0.5 percent in 2000 to 2.5 percent in 2012, in the Couffo region, where the Cohort girls live, zero percent of 15-24-year-old females attained tertiary education in 2012. At the same time, whilst males in the same age group had a higher national attainment rate, there was a similarly striking regional disparity (national average: 5 percent, Couffo region: 0.7 percent in 2012).[62] For both males and females, the urban/rural gap demonstrates issues of access; with 4.8 percent of urban females and 9.6 percent of urban males, versus 0.3 percent of rural females and 1.2 percent of rural males attaining tertiary education in 2012.[64]

What emerges from the data is the significance of role models for both the girls and their families. A number of parents and care-givers express concern that their daughters do not have an appropriate role model or point to the responsibility of older girls in the family to provide an example: **"That's why I struggle so much to see that their elder sister completes school. We don't have a role model in the family whom children can look up to"** (Amelia's father, Uganda, 2016). Some, like Lelem's mother in Togo, hope that their daughter can embody this vital figure within their community: **"I would like her to go further in their studies regardless of her age; I want her to be a female model for our community."**

Also evident is the influence of female representation in public life in providing, at the **Structural Level** not only aspirational objectives for the girls, but attitudinal shifts in their parents and care-givers with regard to what kind of roles it is possible, and acceptable, for women and girls to carry out in society. In Uganda, a number of girls point to the first female elected Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda as their role model: **"My role model is the Rt. Hon. Kadaga. I admire her because she has a lot of money and she knows English"** (Nimisha, Uganda, 2017). Similarly, in the Benin and Togo Cohorts, the aspiration to become a government minister is increasingly cited by the girls: **"I don't admire anyone in the house…I would prefer to be like a minister because they have lots of money and dress well"** (Jacqueline, Benin, 2017). The influence of this appears to have two strands: at the **Structural Level** where the visibility of female government ministers and provisions to ensure political participation is inspirational – see Annex 2 – and at the **Social Level** where the expectations of parents and care-givers have also been affected: **"I think [my parents] want me to continue going to school and become a minister"** (Folami, Togo, 2017).

The following comments from Alice's father in Benin demonstrate the potential for representation to go further than the aspirational, and actually influence attitudinal or even behavioural change: **"If you have a woman minister, should you wait for her to come back from her work to cook for you? No! You can't wait for your minister**

PLAN INTERNATIONAL UGANDA

Studying at school in Uganda, 2018

wife to come home and cook. Everything that men do, women can also do and vice-versa" (2017).

In 2017, Margaret's aunt stresses the importance of women and girls being financially independent from their husbands. This is expressed both through her hopes for her neice, **"I hope that Margaret progresses well in her studies so she can find a good job and be financially independent so that she can take care of herself and her children even if her husband can't"**, and for herself, **"I would like to build a lovely house which belonged only to me."** On the **Social Level**, this attitude has potentially influenced Margaret's new expression, in 2017, of the concept of aspiring for "independence": **"It's very important for boys and girls to go to school so they can find a job and be independent."** She even accepts her parents' gendered distinction in their aspirations for herself and her brother: **"I think this is a good idea, we would each have our own job."**

Margaret's attitude towards another aspect of her future – marriage and children – is particularly deviant within the SSA Cohort. From 2016, she maintains that she does not want to marry or have children and wishes instead to be a nun. When asked, "Do you have male friends?" she said, **"No, only girls and this will not change as I want to become a nun and not get married."** This attitude is unchanged in 2017: **"I would like to be rich. I want to be a nun as I don't want to get married or have children."** Interestingly, Margaret does not regard becoming a nun as a career choice – she expresses her wish to go to university and become a nurse - but rather, she associates it specifically with avoiding marriage and motherhood. The prevailing social norm in this context is for females and males to enter into a heterosexual marital union, which is reflected in Margaret's parents' and aunt's expectations that she will have a husband in the future. On the **Individual Level** her verbal rejection of this demonstrates a high level of awareness of her own priorities, and a strategic mapping of a way to achieve this. Margaret has deduced that in her community the only way to deviate from the social expectation that she marries and has children is by becoming a nun. What **Social** or **Structural Level** factors have influenced this unusual attitude is hard to define.

Though Margaret's aunt appears to expect that Margaret will have a husband in the future, she is an example of Margaret's exposure on the **Social Level** to somewhat critical attitudes towards married life: **"Yes, women are responsible for house work. This is in the community, but it is unjust because women remain slaves to their husbands."** While Margaret's aversion to marriage and motherhood is not unique within the Cohort, the more common deviations expressed by the girls are:

- **i** the age at which they expect to marry, in contexts where child marriage rates are high
- **ii** what they will have achieved prior to marriage, in contexts where rates of progression on to secondary and tertiary education are low, particularly for females
- **iii** the desire to have significantly fewer children than their mothers, in contexts where the fertility rate is decreasing but remains high, and access to and use of family planning remains limited.

Both the girls and their mothers often state, as Nimisha from Uganda did in 2017, that they hope the girls' lives will have a different outcome from their own: **"My life is going to be different from that of my mother because I have studied and reached where my mother did not reach…her life is not good."** Namazzi's mother in Uganda echoes this, **"I expect her to study hard and get a job and not be in the life I am going through. I know she will get a job, however small it will be,**

PLAN INTERNATIONAL UGANDA

Classmates playing together in Uganda, 2018

but I expect her future will be better than mine." As is the case for Jacqueline in Benin, girls whose parents or carers express concern that their daughters may marry early, before they have finished studying and found a job, generally repeat this idea: further emphasising the importance of **Social Level** influences on girls' perceptions related to expectations around their future roles:

> **"I would like Jacqueline to have a job before she gets married or has a child."**
> Jacqueline's mother, Benin, 2017

> (At what age do you think girls should get married?) **"I think she should get married at 30 after finishing her studies and finding a job."**
> Jacqueline, Benin, 2017

Overall, both parents and the girls themselves are notably vocal about their opposition to child and early marriage. Reine, in Togo, for example believes that girls should get married at 18 but does not wish to herself because **"I'll still be a child."** This shows a distinction between what Reine feels others *should* do and what she herself *would* do or would prefer to do – reflecting an indication of her changing perceptions around what is appropriate and accepted, even if she still feels others should 'comply'. The majority of parents and carers raise early marriage as a concern for their daughter, whether in the context of not wanting her to experience what they – her mother/grandmother/aunt – experienced, or viewing it as an obstacle to the girl achieving her potential in terms of education, career, and ultimately the possibility of her earning money to support herself and her parents in old age. The rates of child marriage in the three country contexts remain high, particularly in Uganda where 40 percent of girls are married before the age of 18,[64] in Togo it is 26 percent,[65] and in Benin 22 percent.[66] However, this opposition could potentially be an indication of **Structural Level** 'trickle down' where the increasing momentum in international discourse and policy towards ending child, early, and forced marriage is creating top-down pressure on family and community norms (see Annex 2 on laws and policies).

2.4 GIRLS' DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Across Benin, Togo, and Uganda, there is a strong gendered division of unpaid care work, even though dynamics between countries differ. Generally, it is the case that the home and domestic world is the female domain while outdoor, manual, and paid labour is male. This is accompanied by a general perception that it is 'appropriate' and 'right' for more domestic work to be allocated to women and girls than to men which relates to broader dynamics around women and girls' roles (see Figure 4 above).

> **"My daughter spends three hours a day on her chores, this is the law of our religion so it's normal…The boys look after the chickens which live behind the house. They spend about an hour and a half on this."**
> Djoumai's mother, Togo, 2017

> **"Some chores are naturally created and meant for a particular gender because there is no way you can ask a girl to climb a tree and cut leaves for animals to eat and also there is no way you can ask a girl to go and milk a cow because it will look funny if she does. Such work is meant for us the male and not the female!… I really don't know where they got this from in our culture, but it does not look good for a woman to do certain kinds of work."**
> Justine's father, Uganda, 2017

Across the Cohort, disruption of norms relating to the gendered division of labour is the most commonly reported and where the broadest range of types of disruption can be observed. Almost all girls report a difference related to the division of responsibilities between males and females – either stating 'unfairness' about the different types of work, the amount of work or the fact that activities are somehow related to differential expectations of 'good' and 'bad' male or female behaviour. For most of the girls, this is based on their own experience or observations within the home. For example, in 2017, Shifa in Uganda said, **"Some boys whose mother asks them to wash utensils or cook, will just say: 'I am a boy, I don't wash plates, I don't cook food, these roles are for women and girls.'"**

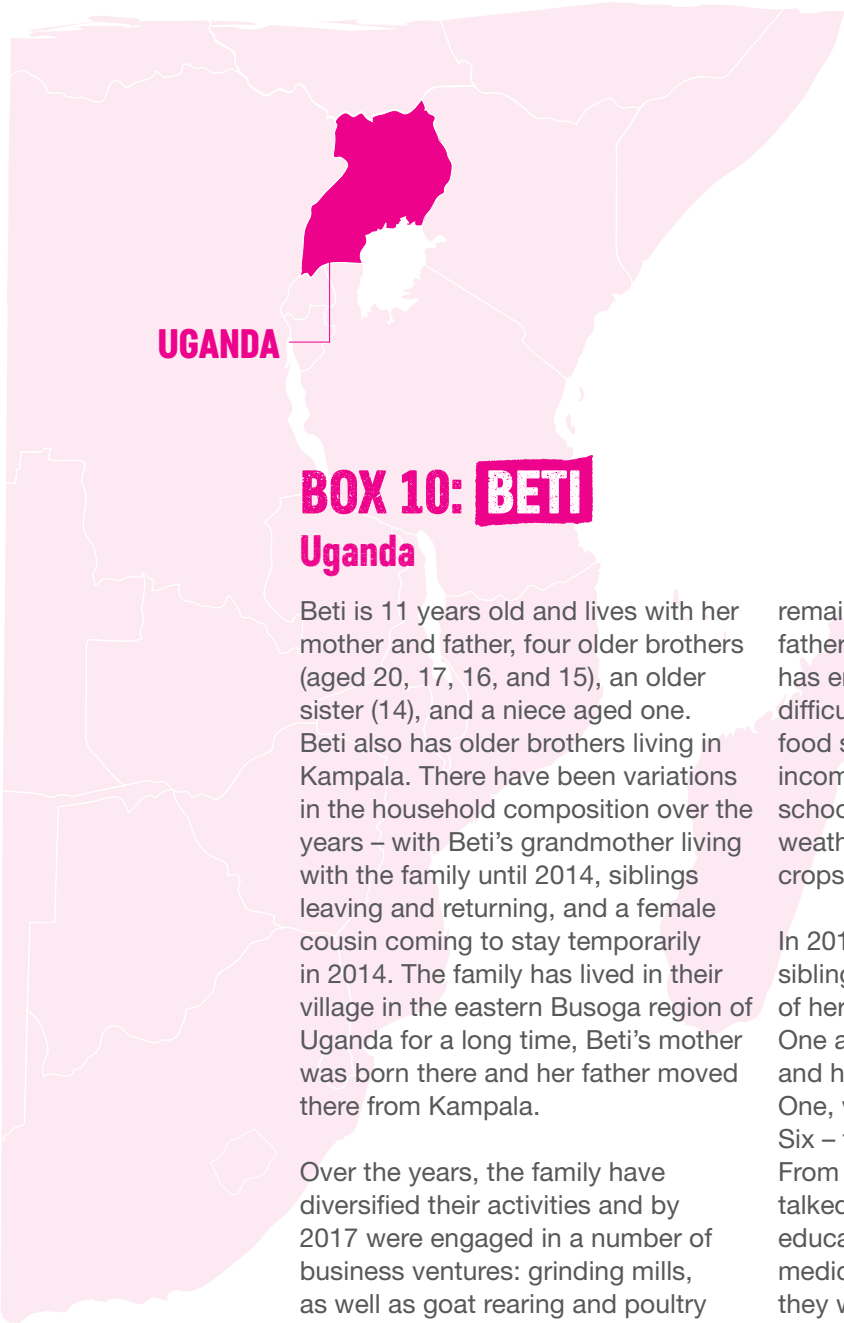
Many girls express attitudinal 'glitches' in voicing their opinion that this division of labour is unfair. In Togo, in 2017, Mangazia complained, **"My parents believe that girls must do housework, while the boys should look after the cattle. I think that is a bit unfair, because girls have to go to the fields with their mothers to collect wood to make charcoal, so the boys could also do some jobs in the house."** In Benin, more of the girls also speak explicitly about girls being able to "do the same" as boys. A small number describe behavioural 'glitches' in how they refuse to do what is asked of them or ask why their brothers and other male peers cannot help or do it instead. Girls whose households include males of a similar or older age to them are more likely to notice or criticise a difference in household roles (see Annex 1 alongside Map 2). This is generally via observations that boys are allowed to play while the girls are working, or noticing the contradiction in the male/female appropriate work norm which says that agricultural, manual, and paid labour is for males and domestic work is for females, even in contexts where girls and women are required to carry out both types of work:

PLAN INTERNATIONAL TOGO

Washing household items in Togo, 2018

"It's not fair because you both go to the garden but remember it's the woman to come back and make sure food is ready on time. So, for you to be able to do, you have to do extra work: you go to the garden very early so that you come back to take care of the home needs. It's not fair because it would be okay for the men also to do the chores and cooking as the women also look for money."
Justine, Uganda, 2017

"Yes, my parents prefer the boys to concentrate on field work and the girls on household tasks. I don't find this fair, the boys could also do some housework as we girls have to go to the fields to help with the planting and the harvest."
Essohana, Togo, 2017



BOX 10: BETI

Uganda

Beti is 11 years old and lives with her mother and father, four older brothers (aged 20, 17, 16, and 15), an older sister (14), and a niece aged one. Beti also has older brothers living in Kampala. There have been variations in the household composition over the years – with Beti's grandmother living with the family until 2014, siblings leaving and returning, and a female cousin coming to stay temporarily in 2014. The family has lived in their village in the eastern Busoga region of Uganda for a long time, Beti's mother was born there and her father moved there from Kampala.

Over the years, the family have diversified their activities and by 2017 were engaged in a number of business ventures: grinding mills, as well as goat rearing and poultry rearing, alongside Beti's father's work as a Primary School teacher. Beti's father owns the milling business, however, her mother is the caretaker, explaining **"[that's] because I am always available while he is gone for work somewhere else."** Beti's father and brothers own the family's livestock. The family's livelihood has remained relatively stable with Beti's father reporting that a diverse income has enabled them to manage despite difficulties, such as rising prices and food shortages. However, although income from milling has covered school fees, failed harvests and weather changes have led to reduced crops, creating economic difficulties.

In 2017, Beti and her school-aged siblings are attending school, with two of her brothers (17 and 16) in Senior One and Senior Three respectively, and her 15-year-old sister in Senior One, while Beti is in Primary Grade Six – the correct grade for her age. From an early age, Beti's parents talked about wanting her to be "better educated" so that she can become a medical doctor or health worker, and they want her to complete university. From 2011-2014, Beti consistently expresses her aspiration to become a nurse and then to become a doctor. In 2016, however, she acknowledges that her parents expect her to become a nurse and her brothers to become doctors and thinks this is fine if her parents pay for her to attend Makerere University. Beti

BETI REPORTS BEING CLOSER TO HER MOTHER. SHE SAYS THIS IS BECAUSE HER MOTHER IS AT HOME MORE OFTEN, BUT HER MOTHER SAYS IT IS BECAUSE BETI "FEARS HER FATHER."

also wishes to have a family – three children – in the future. Both parents acknowledge the very real challenge of paying school fees but note the importance of education: **"as long as I am alive, my child will complete her education"** (Beti's father, 2012). In 2017, Beti's mother says that education is important for girls, unlike her own parents who **"would only put their emphasis on educating boys"**, so that they are able to get a job and provide at home, especially because of **"the fact that things have changed and men are turning over responsibility to the women"** – something she describes happening in her own home.

Beti's father has a respected position as head of the household, evident in his eating separately whilst her mother eats with the children. At the same time, in 2017, Beti's mother says she has the authority to make financial decisions because she is contributing to the family finances with her produce from the field. The approach to division of responsibilities in Beti's home appears to deviate from gendered norms. Beti's father says he undertakes child care, noting in 2010, **"I cook for them while the mother is away"** and in 2013, her mother says that she and her husband **"do home chores together."** Both Beti and her mother describe how boys do less work than girls at home and regard this is as unfair. In 2015, Beti's mother comments that she has acted on this to redress the imbalance: **"I noticed that that was unfair, so I decided that everyone should get involved."**

Though she spends time with both her mother and her father – usually carrying out household or agricultural activities respectively – Beti reports being closer to her mother. She says this is because her mother is at home more often, but her mother says it is because Beti **"fears her father."** When Beti has worries, she turns to her mother for support and also has a number of close female friends. Beti's father prefers girls and boys to play separately, but states in 2016 that he approves of mixed classes at school. In 2017, Beti says that she is not friends with boys, but that girls and boys do play together.

FIGURE 6: BETI

Timeline of 'glitches' (*when* and *where*)

Household chores

Are there certain activities that you do that are different from you those that are done by boys of your age?
"Yes, I mop and they don't mop."
What else?
"Sweeping the house."
How do you feel about the activities that you do when others are not doing it?
"I feel good." [discursive – noticed a difference, acceptant]

Saying "no" to peers

Saying "no" to parents

2015

Do you think you do more work in comparison to what your sisters and brothers do?
"Yes."
Why is it like that?
"I like to do more than they do."
Do you think that girls and boys do different work?
"Yes."
What work do you think girls do?
"A girl cooks, sometimes mops, bath the children and sweep the compound."
How about the boys?
"Boys dig, they fetch water and do labour for pay."
Do you think it is fair and equal for girls to do different work from boys? Or you think that boys should sometimes do the work that girls do like wash the dishes.
"No…Because it is girls [who are] supposed to wash dishes." [discursive – noticed a difference + attitudinal – verbal attitude]

Is there a difference between the chores done by men and women?
"Yes."
Which kind of chores are done by the women?
"Women usually cook food, sweep the house and mop the house… Men usually graze animals, collect water…"
Do you think the way these chores are distributed is fair?
"No."
Why do you think it is not fair?
"Because the chores women do are more as compared to those done by the men." [discursive – noticed a difference, attitudinal – verbal attitude]
What should we do in order to see that there is a balance between the chores done by women and those done by the men?
"By teaching the children discipline and also by telling them to do all kinds of chores, [whether they are] a boy or a girl." [discursive – noticed a difference, attitudinal – verbal attitude]

"No, I would tell her that I will not be able to do it." [attitudinal – verbal attitude – behavioural – described hypothetical behaviour]

While at home here, what would you do in case your parent asked you to do something that you don't want to do?
"I can cry…I can get angry." [attitudinal – verbal attitude – behavioural – described hypothetical behaviour]

2016 **2017**

2.4.1 How and why 'glitches' emerge

Through looking at the case of Beti (see Case Study Box 10 and Figure 6), we see that she is very aware of the differing gendered expectations of boys and girls in terms of domestic and manual labour. In 2015, aged nine, when asked if there is anything she does in the house that other boys her age do not do, she responded, **"Yes…I mop, and they don't mop…[also] sweeping the house."** However, she also reported that she felt "good" when doing these activities while others did nothing. Similarly, when asked if she thought boys and girls do different work in 2016, Beti responded, **"Yes…A girl cooks, sometimes mops, baths the children and sweeps the compound,"** while **"boys dig, they fetch water and [do] labour for pay."** When asked if she thought this division of labour was fair and if she thought boys should also do 'girls" work, Beti gives a somewhat unclear answer, potentially demonstrating reluctance, but repeating the gendered expectation she has been taught: **"No…Because it is girls [who are] supposed to wash dishes."** The shift in Beti's attitude concerning the gendered division of labour in her home and community comes in 2017, aged 11. She not only stated that the way the chores are divided between males and females is unfair **"…because the chores women do are more [than] compared to those done by the men,"** but further suggests a way to change this social norm all together **"…by teaching the children discipline and also telling them to do all kinds of chores, [whether they are] a boy or a girl."**

On the **Individual Level**, Beti demonstrates low awareness of the gendered differences around her, and, until 2017, does not appear to question or disrupt unequal social norms. The same year, Beti and her mother report signs of Beti maturing and entering puberty which may be contributing to Beti's development of, and confidence in expressing, her own observations and opinions.[67]

On the **Social Level**, in 2015, Beti's mother, with whom Beti has said she has a close relationship, expressed a disruptive attitude towards the norm of gendered division of labour which may have influenced her daughter's own attitudes. Beti's mother not only criticised the unequal division of labour in her own home but described how she actively changed this: **"Previously, during rainy seasons, we would say only girls or only boys should do this or that, but we discovered that it affects them. Now, if I say that only girls cook, it seems so unfair but previously it was that boys are not**

Box 11 Beti's mother and decision-making in the household

Beti's mother makes an interesting statement, in 2015, describing an active change to the traditional gendered dynamics between herself and her husband regarding economic decision-making for the family. When asked, "Who decides on matters of finances?" she comments, **"Right now, it is both of us but previously it was only my husband who used to decide, and it used to affect us but…[an NGO] brought for us teaching about how to handle money issues between a man and a woman. So, today it is not only for a man to decide…It's not like those days when we women used to keep quiet."** Beti's mother points here to the influence of NGO interventions programmed and funded on the **Structural Level** but reaching people at the **Social Level**.

supposed to cook. As for me, I noticed that it was unfair, so I decided that everyone should get involved." With this shift in behaviour, Beti's mother demonstrates the potential to both acknowledge and act upon observations that something socially accepted is, in fact, unfair (see also Box 11 below).

In 2015, Beti's mother, following the change that she made in her household, said she now regarded the division of labour to be fair. The extent to which the changes described have been implemented in the home is difficult to measure: in 2016, Beti's father portrayed an apparent continuation of gendered roles in his home where women **"do all household work"** and **"the men are mainly the bread winners, help in harvesting crops and taking care of the family needs."** However, he did also state that while this is the men's main role they also **"sometimes help in household work"** and that he did not think the way roles and chores were distributed in his home were fair.

A number of mothers and female carers in the Cohort similarly criticise the disproportionate burden of domestic work placed on women and girls in their homes and communities though only a minority of women suggest this set-up can be changed. Those who do generally point to their husbands and other males in the community to change their behaviour and share the household responsibilities, but these discursive attitudes do not appear to be communicated into active norm change. Ayomide's mother stated in 2017, **"I don't think it's fair. If I could change anything I would raise men's awareness about helping women with the children, I would also make them give money for the cooking to the women"** (Togo).

Like Beti's father, other fathers in the Cohort also expressed similar attitudes wherein they appear to criticise the social norm that requires women to undertake the burden of domestic work: **"No, they are not [satisfied with what they do compared to men] because they are doing too much so I think it's not proportionate and [there is] no equity in these roles"** (Jane's father, Uganda, 2017). However, when it comes to the concept of transforming these roles, few show evidence of a willingness to act. Jane's father continued, **"I can't handle my wife's chores and roles, so I don't want them to change,"** suggesting that their disruptive attitudes remain discursive and superficial. In 2014, Margaret's father in Benin is one of the few men who state an intention to act on his observation of inequality and instigate behavioural change: **"No, it's not fair. I'll start helping my wife in domestic chores."** However, in the subsequent years there is no suggestion that the division of labour in this household has changed, illustrating that these discursive and attitudinal 'glitches' in fathers do not appear to translate into behavioural change.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL BENIN

Doing washing at home in Benin, 2018

2.5 GIRLS' PHYSICALITY

Across all three countries, when asked if it is important for girls to be strong and fit,[68] most girls who state that it *is* point to this meaning either that they are healthy, or able to carry out all the chores required of them. However, six Cohort girls deviate from this attitude. In 2017, two girls in Benin regarded being strong and fit with enabling a girl to be **"equal to boys at school"** (Barbara, Benin, 2017) and say, **"if they are not strong and fit they won't be able to work at the same level as the boys"** (Alice, Benin, 2017). In the previous year the same two girls had also associated being strong and fit with carrying out their domestic tasks, with Barbara saying, **"so they can work well at home and at school"** and Alice that **"they must be healthy to carry out their work."** The following year, the girls demonstrate that being equal to boys in abilities is very, and possibly newly, important to them, whilst also indirectly suggesting that they view being 'strong and fit' as 'male' attributes which they aspire to have themselves. Azia in Togo thinks that it is important for girls to be strong **"so that nobody cheats them,"** a concern expressed by a number of parents and carers often in relation to fears of boys cheating or tricking girls, presumably into 'risky' activities or relationships. The context of 'disagreement' is slightly more extreme in Uganda and reflective of concerning underlying dynamics (see Box 12).

All of the girls in the SSA Cohort think it is important for girls to be beautiful and many include being beautiful in their aspirations for the future. A large number interpret being beautiful with being clean, being liked by others, and feeling good about themselves, with Alice from Benin stating in 2017, **"I think girls feel better about themselves when they are clean and beautiful."** Being clean and beautiful is also valued because it attracts male attention, including cat-calling: ("Is it important for girls to be beautiful?") **"Yes, because when they are clean and beautiful, they attract the attention of boys who call out to them; I've seen this in the neighbourhood"** (Barbara, Benin, 2017). In Uganda, some girls discuss skin bleaching in association with being beautiful, and while none have reported undergoing this practice their language suggests it is quite normal: **"There are those who bleach to become beautiful, but some even become just ugly"** (Sheila, Uganda, 2017).

Box 12 Being strong and fit to defend yourself

In Uganda, three girls associate the importance of being strong and fit with a girl's ability to defend herself from violence. In 2017, when asked, "Is it important for girls to be strong and fit?", Sylvia in Uganda said, **"Yes because if you do not have energy they tease you and beat you but if you have energy, you can also beat them."** Amelia and Miremba explicitly associate the value of girls' physicality with being able to defend themselves against the risk of rape and attack, Amelia stating, **"Yes because it can help her when she has a problem, for example, if maybe someone wants to rape her she can fight against them"** and Miremba saying, **"Yes when she is doing anything, she does it with energy and finishes it quickly. When she finds a man who rapes young children along the road she will fight him and win."** This is worrying, as it exposes the underlying threats arising from gendered social norms that legitimise violence against girls. The rates of violence in Uganda are the highest amongst the three countries – with 49.9 percent of girls and women aged over 15 reporting that they have experienced some form of intimate partner violence (see Annex 2).[69]

2.6 GIRLS' RESTRICTED MOVEMENT: THE ABSENCE OF 'GLITCHES'

It is notable that the girls from Benin, Togo, and Uganda show almost no resistance to restrictions on their movement. While many, like Barbara in Benin, in 2017, demonstrate an awareness of the gendered differences in where girls and boys can or cannot go – **"Boys can go where they like but girls can't"** – their comments generally do not reflect critical attitudes or norm-challenging behaviour. At the onset of puberty, the relative freedoms that girls had to move around their communities are often significantly reduced by their parents and carers: **"I don't like Mangazia to go near places that are a bit dangerous or violent as her attitude could change if she mixed with bad company"** (Mangazia's mother, Togo, 2017). Further, according to the father of Joy in Uganda, **"she should be in a position to stay at home…A good girl should not go out to watch films in video halls."** The gendered social norm that restricts adolescent girls to specific 'safe' spaces – their home, school, church/mosque/temple – while allowing adolescent boys the same freedoms that they had as children, is justified by most parents and carers on the basis that:

i. exposure to certain people and places in the community may negatively influence a girl's attitude and behaviour

ii. exposure to certain people and places in the community represents a high risk of experiencing violence, including GBV.

What we see in the girls is the repetition of these parental concerns about the risk of GBV: **"Some other people think that girls and boys should move together, even when they go to bath, but others think that when you bath together the boys can rape you"** (Justine, Uganda, 2017). In other cases, girls dismiss these social 'rules' as unimportant because they don't want to go to those prohibited places anyway: **"There are places like burials where girls are not allowed to go. I'm glad about this as I don't want to look at a corpse. There are no places where girls can go but boys are forbidden"** (Nini-Rike, Togo, 2017).

The restrictions placed on specific spaces in the community where interactions between the girl and others could or do take place, highlights how influential **Social Level** factors are, or are perceived to be. Until changes occur elsewhere on the **Social Level** – in a girls' peer group, in the local society, in local infrastructure – it is difficult for an individual girl to challenge or disrupt gendered social norms on movement, without potentially putting herself in danger.

3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis of the *Real Choices, Real Lives* data in Benin, Togo, and Uganda – the first in our series of three regionally-focused reports – highlights cases where girls, or their family members, **verbally express an attitude** or describe a behaviour that constitutes a deviance from a gendered social norm. Here, the longitudinal view of our data and its emphasis on girls' own experiences, provides a unique perspective in exploring the gender socialisation process. Whilst we recognise that these attitudes and described behavioural changes may not always translate into 'disruptive' action or behaviour in practice, identifying these 'glitches' is important because they represent the first step, and a degree of 'consciousness raising' in the process of disrupting gendered social norms. This discussion will also inform our analysis of the girls and their families living in the LAC countries and the SEA countries. We expect that, whilst there may be commonalities, we will see variation not only in the types and degree to which 'glitches' are expressed, but also in relation to the influences of 'disruption'. We will build from this foundation to explore and synthesise these different influencing factors across the study and examine where policy and programme interventions might be most effective in supporting girls' resistance and building transformative change.

3.1.1 Adolescence as a critical and dynamic stage in the life-course

Notably we see that, for the SSA Cohort girls, the process of noticing and contesting gendered distinctions is not linear and is subject to fluctuation – both across different aspects of a girl's life, as well as across time. These fluctuations significantly relate to the onset of adolescence. Our evidence points to the fact that expectations of girls – in relation, for example, to the acceptability of interacting or playing with boys – are reinforced at this stage although gendered expectations in relation to domestic responsibilities begin from an earlier age. At the same time, we see that, as the girls enter adolescence, there is an increase in expressions that reflect 'glitches' in how they understand, respond to, and internalise gendered differences. Our detailed longitudinal analysis – especially through the three case studies – highlights that these 'glitches' shift across the life-course. We see that norms, which are at one point adhered to unquestioningly, subsequently become questioned or contested. However, there are also indications that this process can revert back. Further, whilst girls may display some degree of resistance to gendered expectations around their behaviour in some areas of their lives, they may simultaneously conform in others. As such, there are clear opportunities to influence these expectations – alongside evidence which highlights the case for this to be done early enough and over a significant enough duration.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL TOGO

Pounding grain for household consumption in Togo, 2018

3.1.2 The importance of role-modelling and the wider social context

Clearly there are strong **individual** capacities amongst the girls, with indications that where their voice and agency is fostered (for example, through parent-child communication) this can translate into them being able to voice opinions and engage in negotiation related to expectations around their roles. Additionally, through placing the analysis within the national contexts, there is evidence that broader **structural** factors are also significant, not only in underpinning gendered norms in the case, for example, of limited access to SRHR, but also that shifts in public discourse may be having an impact on individual willingness and ability to 'speak out.' This appears to be the case in Uganda where there are marked differences in terms of how girls describe saying "no" in relation to morality. Changing educational opportunities may also be influencing what girls consider to be possible. However, differential provision and limitations on access between different regions within countries limits the potential for this to be translated into a reality, as can be seen in Benin within the context of tertiary education.

Across the three SSA countries, it is evident that **Social Level** factors, including household dynamics and social institutions, are the most significant influencers in forming and breaking gendered social expectations. Indeed, we see indications that behaviours which go against or transgress the expected norm are increasingly concealed by girls as they get older and, in some cases, this concealment shifts from the domestic sphere to the public sphere. At the same time, there are suggestions that school and the wider community may be places where gendered expectations of behaviour are less strictly policed. However, whilst the wider literature points to schools as potential sites for social change, they can also be sites where gender inequalities are perpetuated (for example, through corporal punishment, sexual violence as well as peer violence)[70] – highlighting that this requires further exploration.

For the girls in Benin, Togo, and Uganda, household dynamics are fluid and changeable but have a significant influence on their lives in many different ways. For example, we see 'glitches' amongst a number of girls in cases where their mothers also speak out against gendered divisions or reflect alternative ways of doing things through their actions: as is evident in the case of Essohana and her mother and in the case of Beti. However, our evidence about the role of the extended family is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, girls are sent to aunts to reinforce gendered expectations of behaviour, whilst on the other hand aunts are the 'go to' people for information that is socially taboo, in particular anything related to SRHR. This creates a situation where wider female household members are both transmitters of gendered expectations as well as potentially contributing to 'consciousness raising' and shifting perceptions.

The importance of key female role models is also evident in relation to the wider context, where women in prominent positions – for example, as referenced by the Cohort girls, the Speaker of the House in Uganda and female MPs in Togo – are seen to inspire not only the girls' aspirations towards "something different", but also their parents and care-givers' perceptions of what is possible or acceptable for a girl's future role. These factors point to the significance of the social context – not only the household but the wider community– to provide spaces and opportunities for girls to engage in activities that facilitate the translation of 'glitches' into disruption, rather than reinforcing gendered norms.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL TOGO

A family compound in Togo, 2017

3.1.3 Persistent barriers to 'disruption' of gendered social norms

Conversely, our evidence shows that, where the wider social network is not supportive, the degree of change is limited. It is clear that persistent concerns related to the wider context – in terms, especially, of the risk of (gender-based) violence and the risks of sex and pregnancy related to 'dangerous' interactions with males – remain a significant barrier to change and limit girls' opportunities and their freedom.

Indeed, we see that 'glitches' can reverse, or fall short of translating into disruption where this is met with opposition from the wider household or social network: as is apparent in the case of Margaret in Benin. In many cases, the limitations on a girl's expressions of 'deviant' behaviour are linked to fear of corporal punishment and deference to older – and in particular male – household members. Corporal punishment is considered a way to maintain order and there are indications from the girls that they fear the repercussions of going against their elders. As we have seen in the comments by Margaret's father in Benin this fear may be considered desirable or reflect the 'correct' state of affairs. Overall while there are signs of fathers verbally supporting change – for example, to make divisions of work more equal between boys and girls – there are fewer indications that they support this happening in practice.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Drawing on our evidence, we provide a number of recommendations which are broadly framed, but relevant to those working in relation to gender and adolescence. Additionally, we outline a number of specific research areas to support the design of future gender transformative programming.

3.2.1 Recommendations for donors and practitioners

Types of interventions to fund

In the context of existing efforts, these recommendations are aimed at donors and practitioners to support the integration of gender transformative approaches through considering the duration and design of interventions. The recommendations are relevant across sectors, for example, from education to economic empowerment.

- **Intervene earlier:** recognising that gender socialisation processes commence from a very early age, efforts to influence adolescents' development and opportunities must begin in childhood.

PLAN INTERNATIONAL TOGO

Sorting charcoal at the family home in Togo, 2018

- **Commit to sustained, long-term interventions throughout adolescence:** recognising that social norm change takes time and is unlikely to be accomplished in short-term project cycles.
- **Employ adaptive programming approaches that allow for risk, failure, and learning:** recognising that social norm change is complex and non-linear and that interventions will need to be responsive to changing dynamics.
- **Invest in and allow time for formative research:** to aid understanding of which norms are most relevant for particular behaviours, who are the key reference groups, and which norms may be most susceptible to influence or change.
- **Continue to support authorities to make wider policy and practice changes:** identifying those that have an impact on realising gender equality outcomes as, for example, enabling access to education and employment opportunities, implementing laws that prohibit child marriage, and enforcing provisions on GBV.

Programme components

The below recommendations point to more sector-specific components of interventions to support gender transformative change. We acknowledge that there are other components that are important for supporting gender transformative change within and across specific sectors/types of intervention. However, these are drawn from evidence presented by the SSA Cohort girls and in response to the framing of the *Real Choices, Real Lives* areas of enquiry.

- **Support interventions which introduce role models into girls' lives:** thus, expanding their aspirations and conceptions of what is possible. This may be done through school engagement, for example, or wider public campaigns.
- **Create opportunities for co-educational activities**: encouraging those that allow for and permit positive interaction between girls and boys, in addition to single-sex safe spaces.
- **Ensure interventions facilitate communication and dialogue between spouses and within households:** promoting and enabling shifts towards more equitable distribution of labour and decision-making.
- **Promote communication at both family and community level:** addressing both GBV and corporal punishment and encouraging discussion in households, communities and schools that will interrogate male behaviour and the impact of violence, or the perceived risks of violence, on girls and young women.

3.2.2 Building the evidence base for future programming

- **Build on existing exploration of schools as potential spaces where gender norms and roles may be less strictly enforced:** enabling young people to explore and experiment with alternative identities and behaviours. How can educational programmes more effectively capitalise on this latent opportunity to foster social norm change?
- **Give greater attention to engaging with the extended family:** noting the significance of practices such as child 'fostering', and the ambiguity related to the role of aunts and other female family members in terms of both re-enforcing gender norms and also distributing socially 'taboo' knowledge.
- **Explore how cognitive reasoning and the development of (gender) identities** in adolescence offer opportunities for transformation and target interventions accordingly.

ANNEX ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE REAL CHOICES, REAL LIVES STUDY AND SUMMARY OF DATA

Background and study design

Overview: *Real Choices, Real Lives* is a longitudinal cohort study tracking the lives of girls from their birth in 2006, until they turn 18 in 2024. The study is conducted in nine countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. It is embedded in a feminist research perspective and builds on a life-course approach exploring critical junctures in girls' lives and the influences of early childhood as they enter early adolescence and beyond.

Approach and methodology: The flexibility inherent in the qualitative approach has enabled us to adapt lines of enquiry in each data collection round, reflecting and building on issues present in girls' lives as they grow up. However, our methodology has remained consistent and is based around a core approach which draws, from the beginning, on in-depth interviews with care-givers and, since 2013 when they reached seven, with the girls themselves. The interviews are supported by participatory and age-appropriate methods, and we have also sought wider perspectives: through life histories with parents and interviews with other household members. We primarily focus on the girl and her immediate family but, in seeking to explore and understand gendered social norms, also include broader evidence to inform our analysis of her community and wider influences. Over the years, we will look to strengthen this – as social networks become increasingly defined in girls' lives.

To date, data collection has been undertaken on an annual basis, coordinated from Plan International UK working alongside Plan International Country Offices and nationally-based research teams. Data is analysed using NVivo, using a case study approach for each of the girls to support longitudinal analysis.

Sampling: *Real Choices, Real Lives* is a relatively small cohort study, with a total of 146 girls forming the original selection across all nine countries. However, there were immediate drop outs as well as deaths – reducing the number to 142 in the first years. Further, due to around half of the girls in Brazil having migrated by 2013, an additional five girls were added to the Cohort. As such, accounting for all girls (including those that have died, migrated or left the study) a total of 156 girls (and/or their families) have at some point been involved. By 2017, *a total of 128 girls were actively participating in the study* (ranging from between 10 and 20 in each country).

Across the nine countries, girls were sampled firstly based on their year of birth (2006). Secondly, the household context was considered with girls selected from amongst the lowest income households in each country context. There is rural/urban variation across the countries, which is reflective of wider urbanisation dynamics: in Brazil the majority of the girls are from urban/peri-urban contexts, while in Benin, Togo, and Uganda the girls are from rural locations.

Ethics: Ethical principles guide our research practices and process from design through to analysis. All research activities are undertaken in line with *Plan International's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies*. Anyone undertaking the study is required to adhere to strict codes of conduct and additional safeguarding measures are put in place including in the handling of data. Ethical clearance for the

research has been sought and obtained from Plan International Global as well as from national ethics review authorities (where these apply to social research), as part of an ongoing commitment to continually strengthen ethics practices. Principles of confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent have been applied, with care-givers asked for consent on an annual basis and girls asked to provide assent (annually, since 2013).

Limitations of the data: The sample size is relatively small. However, this is offset by the depth of data as well as the length of time – 12 years – over which it has now been collected. Further, the data does not claim to be 'representative' but highlights the generalised experiences of girls across contexts which we know are marked by gender inequality. Its value lies in the nuance and depth of the analysis.

In addition, we acknowledge that not directly engaging boys (i.e. a male cohort) is a limitation in terms of how we explore and understand gendered social norms. However, the study was specifically designed to focus on girls and their experiences. Through our design we seek to understand girls' own perceptions of relations with both other females and males, as well as to take account of broader perspectives, where feasible: in some years we have undertaken wider analysis with communities, looking at schools for example and conducting focus group discussions with older girls (mainly relatives). Drawing analysis from these components also relates to understanding the girls' wider social reference group, which is important for our consideration of norms. It is an ongoing priority to develop approaches that will enable us to explore wider perspectives in a systematic and meaningful way.

Lastly, whilst the value of the study comes from taking account of girls' lives broadly – in terms of a range of dimensions, including education, health, household economy, and relationships – this is simultaneously a limitation. The study's breadth means there are some areas where we do not have sufficient detail to draw conclusions.

Future direction of Real Choices, Real Lives

Given the complex and highly context-specific nature of gender social norms, qualitative data, of the kind which *Real Choices, Real Lives* captures, remains valuable in providing the 'stories' and nuance behind the numbers, building understanding of what cannot be explained by statistics alone.[71]

As we take the study forward, we are in a unique position to track the progress of the girls until they turn 18 and to develop our analysis of *where*, *when*, *how* and – importantly – *why*, or *why not*, 'glitches' in the gender socialisation translate into 'disruption' in their lives.

In the coming years, we will look to explore further the significant areas of interest which have emerged from this in-depth examination of data from the SSA countries including:

1. tThe influence of positive/negative relationships with family members on disruption or reproduction of gendered norms; specifically, to identify who the 'disrupters' are – generation, sex, relationship to the girl – as well as where and how they disrupt and why

2. The obstacles which prevent the transformation of 'glitches' into disruption of norms and whether these obstacles are:
   a. *structural, social, or individual*
   b. *rooted in context-specific conditions and conceptualisations*
   c. *changeable or would any intervention have to work within their constraints?*

Overview of the Benin, Togo, and Uganda girls' contexts and data

In the 2017 SSA Cohort there are 37 girls in total: 10 in Benin, 15 in Togo, and 13 in Uganda. The table below provides a summary both of the girls' household structure (based on information from 2017), as well as their participation over the study: indicating where they have died, migrated, or left the study, either temporarily or permanently.

Table 4 Benin, Togo, and Uganda: Summary of Cohort girls' household structures (in 2017) and participation

Name	Summary of household context (2017)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	Benin												
Alice	Father (pastor, 42), mother (seller- beans, 40), two brothers (24 and 18), two sisters (21 and 15).	🟢	🟢	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Annabelle	Father (taxi driver/door-to-door seller, 43), mother (seller-produce, 37), one brother (nine), one sister (15).	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Barbara	Father (tailor, 56), mother (dressmaker, 41), two brothers (16 and nine), one sister (18).	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Omalara	Data not held for 2017	🟢	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴
Catherine	Father (painter and decorator, 43), mother (reseller/trader- baby's clothes, 40), three brothers (13, seven, and four).	🟢	🟢	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Ianna	Data not held for 2017	🟢	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵
Eleanor	Mother (farmer, 52), grandmother (93), one brother (17), one sister (14), one sister-in-law (20). *Father deceased.*	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Isabelle	Uncle (agent at SBEE – energy company, 45), paternal aunt (reseller/trader, 38), four male cousins (18-tailer apprentice, 16- plumbing apprentice, 14, and 12), one female cousin (16).	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Lillian	Data not held for 2017	🟢	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴	🔴
Elaine	Data not held for 2017	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵
Jacqueline	Polygamous family. Father (shop manager, 37), mother (seller- soya, 31), two step-mothers (24 and 27), two sisters (seven and five), two half-brothers (four and one), and other half-siblings (no data).	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟢
Layla	Father (bike mechanic, 30), mother (seller-cheese, 26), four brothers (nine, six, four, and two), one sister (14).	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢

KEY

🟢 Participated 🟠 Temporary absence 🔴 Died 🔵 Migrated 🟣 Withdrew from study

Name	Summary of household context (2017)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Margaret	Uncle (primary school teacher, 40), paternal aunt (reseller/trader and farmer, 39), female cousin (13). Until 2017 lived with: Father (carpenter, 50), mother (seller- akassa, 36), two brothers (nine and six) two sisters (16 and two).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Thea	Mother (seller-produce, 43), grandmother (62), three brothers (18, 16, and 13) and aunt (13). *Father deceased.*	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Elizabeth	*Data not held for 2017*	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated
	Togo												
Mangazia	Polygamous family. Father (crop producer/ animal breeder, 39), mother (charcoal/firewood seller, 28), two stepmothers (25 and 23), six brothers (and half-brothers) (18, eight, six, four, three, and six months), seven sisters (and half-sisters) (18, 14, 12, 12, five, five months, and one month), one uncle (25), one male cousin (12).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Melyah	*Data not held for 2017*	Temporary absence	Temporary absence	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated	Temporary absence	Temporary absence	Participated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated
Adjoa	*Data not held for 2017*	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated	Participated	Temporary absence	Participated	Withdrew from study	Withdrew from study	Withdrew from study	Withdrew from study	Withdrew from study	Withdrew from study
Reine	Father (farmer, 39), Mother (crop production, 36), grandfather (73), grandmother (61), one brother (five), one sister (14), one uncle (26), one male cousin (14), one female cousin (eight).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Ayomide	Mother (charcoal/firewood seller, 32), grandfather (81), grandmother (51), one brother (three), one aunt (19), two female cousins (18 and 10). *Father absent.*	Participated	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Aria	*Data not held for 2017*	Participated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated
Isoka	*Data not held for 2017*	Participated	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Died	Died	Died	Died
Larba	Father (farmer, 38), mother (seller- coal and drinks, 31), three sisters (15, six, and four).	Participated	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Esi	*Data not held for 2017*	Participated	Participated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated
Aisosa	*Data not held for 2017*	Participated	Temporary absence	Participated	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died
Ala-Woni	Polygamous family. Father (farmer, 53), mother (trader, 39), one step-mother (trader, age unknown), three brothers (22, 19, and 18), two sisters (16, one), two half-brothers (nine and nine).	Participated	Temporary absence	Temporary absence	Participated	Temporary absence	Participated	Temporary absence	Participated	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated	Participated
Essohana	Mother (distiller and seller of local drink, 46), three brothers (24, 21, and 17), two sisters (16 and 14), one niece (six), one nephew (two). *Father absent.*	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated

KEY

Participated · Temporary absence · Died · Migrated · Withdrew from study

Name	Summary of household context (2017)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Azia	Father (farmer and seller, 66), mother (seller-produce, 47), six brothers (35, 26, 24, 14, 10, and six), three sisters (15, nine, four), one sister-in-law (29).	🟢	🟠	🟢	🟠	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Iara	*Data not held for 2017*	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠	🟢	🟣	🟣	🟣	🟣	🟣	🟣	🟣
Dofi	*Data not held for 2017*	🟢	🟠	🟢	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵
Folami	Grandmother (no income, 71), mother (no income, 26), paternal uncle (farmer, 19), paternal aunt (20). *Father absent, possibly deceased.*	🟠	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Anti	Polygamous family. Father (income unknown, 62), mother (dressmaker, 47), one step-mother (income unknown, 48), five brothers (and half-brothers) (22, 17, 17, 12, and five), three sisters (and half-sisters) (15, 15, and eight), one uncle (58), one aunt (65).	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Nini-Rike	Polygamous family. Father (farmer, 47), mother (trader, 39), one step-mother (trader, 39), nine brothers (and half-brothers) (20-carpenter, 18, 17, 16, 14, 13, eight, six, and five), one sister (seven), one female cousin (eight).	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Lelem	Polygamous family. Girl moved to live with father 2017. Previously lived with: Grandmother (61), two aunts (23 and 13), three female cousins (10, seven, and four).	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Djoumai	Father (farmer, 77), mother (collects/transports sand, 55), two brothers (31, 21), two sisters (28, eight), one niece (eight).	🟢	🟢	🟢		🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Tene	Polygamous family. Girl absent- left village in 2017. Previously lived with: Father (farmer and seller, age unknown), mother (trader, 43), two brothers (18 and 14), one sister (12), one uncle (42).	🟠	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠
Omorose	*Data not held for 2017*	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵	🔵
Nana-Adja	Polygamous family. Father (builder, 48), mother (seller- firewood, 40), one step-mother (45), five brothers (22, 21, 20, 18, and 16), one sister (two), two half-brothers (10 and four), one half-sister (14).	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Fezire	Father (seller, 43), mother (seller- cassava and doughnuts, 36), grandmother (74), three brothers (15, 11-girl's twin, and eight), one sister (five).	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢
Ladi	Father (motorbike taxi driver, 52), mother (seller-porridge, 37), grandmother (73), five brothers (18, 16, eight, six, and one), two sisters (14 and 10), three uncles (52, 28, and 26).	🟠	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟠	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢

KEY

🟢 Participated 🟠 Temporary absence 🔴 Died 🔵 Migrated 🟣 Withdrew from study

Name	Summary of household context (2017)	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Anti-Yara	Father (farmer and carpenter, 40), mother (no income, previously seller-soya cheese, 39), one brother (nine), one sister (five).	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Izegbe	*Data not held for 2017*	Participated	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died
	Uganda												
Amelia	Mother (seller – clothes and agricultural products, 36), father (seller – clothes and produce, 40), three brothers (17, 13, and two), two sisters (18 and eight).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Beti	Father (teacher, runs grinding mill, 42), mother (farmer, 38), four brothers (20, 16, 17, and 15), one sister (14), one niece (one).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Dembe	Father (farming and motorcycle (*bodaboda*) business, 36), step-mother (no income, age unknown), one sister (two), one step-sister (five), one step-brother (one month).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated
Jane	Father (sells alcohol), mother (farmer, 47), three sisters (22, four, and two), three brothers (14, seven and five).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Joy	Uncle (farmer, 39), Aunt (no income, 37), five male cousins (14, 11, nine, six, and two), two female cousins (15 and three).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Temporary absence	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated	Participated
Justine	Father (vet/farmer, 49), mother (farmer, 47), grandfather (95), one cousin female (three), one niece (three), one other male (unknown relationship/age).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Miremba	Father (farmer, 38), mother (farmer, age unknown), one brother (12), three sisters (19, 16, and 15).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Namazzi	Father (farmer, 41), mother (farmer, 38), two sisters (16 and six).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Temporary absence	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Nasiche	*Data not held for 2017*	Participated	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died	Died
Nimisha	Father (farmer, 50), mother (farmer, 40), two brothers (16 and 14), two sisters (20 and eight).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Rebecca	Father (farmer and 'business', 35), mother (farmer, 31), three brothers (seven, four, and two), one sister (nine).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Temporary absence	Participated	Participated
Sheila	Grandmother (farmer, 50), two brothers (12, four), three sisters (seven, six, and four).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Shifa	Father (farmer, 40), mother (farmer, 38), two brothers (five and four), one sister (nine).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Sylvia	Father (farmer, 50), mother (seller-pancakes, 39), three sisters (nine, five, and one).	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated	Participated
Achen	*Data not held for 2017*	Participated	Temporary absence	Participated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated	Migrated

KEY

Participated · Temporary absence · Died · Migrated · Withdrew from study

ANNEX TWO: CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS: INDICATORS AND POLICY/LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY[72]

Indicator	Country					
	Benin		Togo		Uganda	
Population (millions)	11.2		7.8		42.9	
Population aged 15-64 (millions)	6.0		4.3		21.5	
Life expectancy	F	M	F	M	F	M
	62.7	59.6	61.3	59.6	62.4	58.0
Income per capita (2011 PPP $)	1,795	2,329	1,265	1,643	1,212	2,109
Human development and gender equality indicators						
HDI score (2017)	0.515		0.503		0.516	
HDI rank (2017)	163		165		162	
HDI (2017)	F	M	F	M	F	M
	0.479	0.547	0.446	0.542	0.475	0.550
Gender Development Index (2017)	0.875		0.822		0.865	
GII score	0.611		0.567		0.523	
GII rank	146		140		126	
SIGI index	0.278 (2014)		0.186 (2014)		0.2163	
Years of schooling (expected)	F	M	F	M	F	M
	11.1	14.0	10.0	13.2	11	12.2
Mean years at school	3.0	4.3	3.3	6.5	4.7	7.2
Population with at least some secondary education (% aged 25 and older) (2010-2017)	18.2 (2016)	32.7 (2016)	26.3	52.5	26.7 (??)	32.4 (??)
Female labour force participation (% 15 and under) (2017	68.7	73.1	75.8	79.4	66.6	74.9

Area[73]	Country		
	Benin	Togo	Uganda
CEDAW ratification	1992	1983	1985
CRC ratification	1990	1990	1990
Gender Equality	1990 Constitution prohibits discrimination and grants equal economic and social rights to men/women.	1992 Constitution provides for equal rights for women and men.	1995 Constitution protects women and their rights.
Political participation	A bill was under consideration to provide quotas for women's political participation.	Amendment to national electoral law in 2013 required that candidate lists include equal numbers of men and women (applied 2018 onwards).	Constitutional provision introduced to increase political participation.
Corporal punishment	Unlawful in the home (Children's Code 2015) and punishable under the Criminal Code (irrespective of bodily injury); unlawful in schools (Children Code 2015).	Prohibited in the home (Article 353 of the Children's Code 2007, and article 357). Prohibited in schools. Covers all forms of violence.	Corporal punishment is unlawful in schools (amendment to Children's Act in 2016). However, right to "reasonable chastisement" recognised under common law. In 2015, a Government Bill to amend the Children's Act to prohibit corporal punishment in the home and all other settings was withdrawn.
Legal status on FGC	Made illegal in 2003 (Law No. 2003-03 on the Suppression of FGM in the Republic of Benin).	Law No. 98-016 1998 and 2015 Penal Code of Togo (Law No. 2015-010) prohibit FGM.	Criminalised under the Prohibition of FGM 2010 Act.
Legal age for marriage (females)	18 (Personal and Family Code, 2004).	18 (Children's Code 2007): may make exceptions on certain grounds to age 16. Guardians/ care-givers cannot arrange.	18 Constitutionally. However, marriage and family laws contradict, and it is 16 in the Customary Marriage Act.
Legal age for marriage (males)	18 (Personal and Family Code, 2004).	18 (Children's Code 2007): may make exceptions on certain grounds – age 16. Guardians/ care-givers cannot arrange. Family Code (2012) specifies free will of marriage, age 18.	18 (including in Customary Marriage Act).
Inheritance rights	Equal rights to inheritance (Personal and Family Code) (but customary law contradicts this provision).	Persons and Family Code provides equal inheritance rights to sons and daughters and surviving male/female spouses. However, it also allows for custom if requested – and customary law typically means women cannot inherit.	Women entitled to 15% of deceased husband's property. However, under customary law women have no right to inherit.

Area[73]	Country		
	Benin	**Togo**	**Uganda**
Marriage laws	Personal and Family Code 2004 abolishes levirate marriage and polygamy outlawed. However, polygamous marriage continues. Women have legal right to divorce.	Persons and Family Code – prohibits levirate, sororate and widowhood practices (relatively widespread, however). Limits bride price. Women can file for divorce under same conditions as men.	Widow inheritance practice. Divorce Act – woman may initiate divorce only on certain grounds. Pending Marriage and Divorce Bill protects women's right to land/other property but not passed and does not apply to Muslim marriages).
Violence against women, and violence against children	Penal Code prohibits domestic violence and rape. In addition, in 2012, a Law on the prevention and punishment of violence against women was enacted (Act. No 2011-26). Act. 2006-19 penalises sexual harassment. Law on the Children's Code in the Republic of Benin.	Draft of the Criminal Code 2012 (not adopted) provides for sexual harassment, domestic violence and rape to be classed as separate offences. Law does not specifically criminalise domestic violence. Rape is punishable – including marital rape. Sexual harassment prohibited under 2006 Labour Code.	In 2009, the first bill criminalising domestic violence was passed and signed into law in 2010 (Domestic Violence Act) (includes physical, sexual, emotional verbal and psychological and economic violence. Protection orders (not previously present in Uganda). Rape a criminal office – but this does not include spousal rape (Penal Code Chapter 14). National Policy on Elimination of Gender Based Violence in Uganda (2016). National Action Plan 2016-2021. Children's Act 2003 (protection from violence, but CP not specifically mentioned).
Movement	Constitution recognises freedom of movement and access to public spaces – extended to all citizens.	Law provides for freedom of movement.	No legal limitations on women's freedom of movement, guaranteed under the Constitution.
Other laws	2006: Adoption of 2006-2011 Strategic Guidelines for development (promote gender equality). 2009: National Policy for Gender promotion (aims to achieve equality by 2025).	General Directorate for the Advancement of Women – 1977; Ministry for promotion of women 2010; National Policy on Gender Equality and Equity 2011.	Pathfinder country for the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (2016).

ENDNOTES

1. Based on the data collection completed in 2017, there were 128 girls actively participating across the study. The original sample in 2006 included 146 girls, however, there were a number of deaths in the first year and there have been drop-outs. Over the years, some girls and/or their families have been unavailable (for example, through migration). Annex 1 presents tables summarising the data held for the Cohort girls in Benin, Togo, and Uganda.
2. Plan International (2018). *Getting it Right: A Guidance Note for Gender Transformative Programming and Influencing* provides an overview of Plan International's approach to gender transformative change, and our broader recognition that change takes time, is highly context specific, and cannot be achieved by one intervention alone.
3. In Uganda, by the 2017 data collection round, three girls from the original sample were no longer involved (two migrated; one died); in Benin ten girls from the original sample participated (three migrated, two died) and in Togo (which originally had the largest sample of 27) 17 of the girls continued to be involved (two left the study, five migrated, and three died) (see Annex 1).
4. A major study, the Global Early Adolescent Study looks to explore the transitions from childhood into adolescence and provides valuable evidence related to how gender norms, relationships, and empowerment are constructed and play out.
5. Young Lives (2016). Adolescence, Youth and Gender: The research challenges. Briefing Note, October 2016.
6. Basu, S., X. Zuo, C. Lou, R. Acharya, and R. Lundgren (2016). Learning to Be Gendered: Gender Socialisation in Early Adolescence Among Urban Poor in Delhi, India, and Shangai, China. Journal of Adolescent Health 61. 2017. S24-S29.
7. UNICEF (2017a). Gender Socialization during Adolescence in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Conceptualization, influences and outcomes. Innocenti Discussion Paper 2017-01. March 2017. N.A John, K. Storbenau, S. Ritter, J. Edmeadees, and N. Balvin.
8. Research has highlighted that the significant cognitive and social development that takes places during adolescence represents an opportunity for effective intervention on concepts previously understood to be set in early childhood. See, for example: Balvin, N. and P. Banati (2017). The Adolescent Brain: A second window of opportunity: A Compendium. UNICEF Innocenti.
9. UNICEF (2017a). and Young Lives (2015). How Gender Shapes Adolescence: Diverging paths and opportunities. Policy Brief 22.
10. UNICEF (2017b). Improving the Methodological Quality of Research in Adolescent Well-being. Reavley, N.J. and Sawyer, S. M. UNICEF Innocenti Research Brief, 2017-03. *However, it should be noted that in in the anthropological literature adolescence, life cycle events and transitional states etc. have been addressed in the ethnography of Sub-Saharan Africa (and elsewhere).*
11. Young Lives (2015).
12. See reports: Plan International UK (2018). *Real Choices, Real Lives: Girls' Burden of Unpaid Care*. https://plan-uk.org/policy/real-choices-real-lives/girls-burden-of-unpaid-care; Plan International UK (2017) *Real Choices, Real Lives: Violence in Girls' Daily Lives*. https://plan-uk.org/policy/real-choices-real-lives/violence-in-girls-daily-lives

13. Social norms commonly proscribe behaviours, making observation and measurement of beliefs relating to those behaviours challenging where it relies on use of counterfactual situations: use of 'proxy' indicators (attitude indicators and degree of agreement/ disagreement), capturing changing intentions, and determining what is actually done are methods used. The importance of contextual data, and the value of qualitative (ethnographic and social-anthropological) approaches are acknowledged in the wider literature. See, for example, *ODI (2015a). Changing gender norms: monitoring and evaluating programmes and projects. Research and Practice note, Knowledge to Action Resource Series 2015. September 2015. Marcus, R. and O'Neill, K. DFID*; and *Cislaghi, B. and L. Heise (2016). Measuring Gender-related Social Norms, Learning Report 1. Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-related Harmful Practices of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.*

14. Vaitla, B., A. Taylor, J. Van Horn, and B. Cislaghi (2017). Social Norms and Girls' Well-Being: Linking Theory and Practice. Washington, D.C.: Data2X. https://www.data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Social-Norms.pdf

15. For example, whilst a study undertaken as part of the Transforming the Lives of Adolescent Girls programme reports, "In all four countries, we found striking examples of men and women defying local norms to give their daughters a better future…These individuals were typically trendsetters and 'positive deviants" the experience of girls in relation to parental interactions and/or their own behaviour are not presented. (ODI (2015b). Social norms, gender norms and adolescent girls: a brief guide).

16. ODI (2015b).

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34. See, the Guttmacher Institute country reports available at: https://www.guttmacher.org/geography/sub-saharan-africafor further details.

35. UNICEF (2017). State of the World's Children. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/SOWC_2017_ENG_WEB.pdf

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59. Data on the gender-disaggregation of the police force in Benin are not available. However, in other countries this is generally a male-dominated profession (for example, in Uganda the ratio is 1:5 males to females in 2015). Reading of Margaret's case gives the impression that this it is similarly viewed as a 'male' profession also in Benin.

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67. See footnote above on physical and psycho-social maturation.

68. Specific questions around bodies and expectations of appearance were included in interviews from 2016 onwards.

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Cover photo: Carrying out household work in Togo, 2018

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