Stemming girls' chronic poverty

Catalysing development change by building just social institutions

Summary

Chronic Poverty Research Centre

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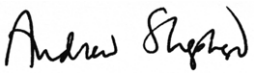
On the basis of consultation among partners and other stakeholders, and following the successful launch of the Second Chronic Poverty Report in 2008, the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC) has decided to work on four major issues in its policy analysis work. These are gender, social protection, economic growth in landlocked countries, and fragile or chronically deprived states. Gender is the first of these to report its work.

Addressing gender inequalities is often among the more intractable policy and political issues of our time, not least in countries where many women and girls are absolutely poor., and is a critical aspect of the struggle against chronic poverty. Teenage girls and young women are a key group whose experience and progress or lack of it at this point in their lives not only shapes their own adulthood, but also the life chances of their children.

Beyond 2015, the chronically poor must certainly be better included in the world's efforts to eradicate poverty. To do this, it is important to learn the lessons from practice on what works in the more difficult policy areas which must be tackled during the coming period. The richness of this report is the many examples of programmes and policies which address the institutional barriers faced by teenage girls and young women in the realisation of their potential.

It will be different combinations of such approaches which will make a difference in the widely varied contexts where girls and women face discrimination and disadvantage, and which will ultimately play a role in changing social norms and institutions.



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Summary

As the recent commitment to creating a higher-profile and better-resourced United Nations (UN) agency to tackle gender inequality highlights,[1] there is growing recognition that promoting gender equality and empowerment across the lifecycle makes both economic and development sense. This was captured by World Bank President Robert Zoellick, who argued that: 'Investing in adolescent girls is precisely the catalyst poor countries need to break intergenerational poverty and to create a better distribution of income. Investing in them is not only fair, it is a smart economic move'.[2]

Debates about gender have historically focused on unequal relations between men and women, as seen in the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, recently – in part because of the child-related focus of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the 2007 World Development Report – there has been growing attention on the need to include girls (and boys) more prominently (e.g. Levine *et al.*, 2009; World Bank, 2006). How to do this effectively remains under-researched, especially in debates around chronic poverty – i.e. the experience of severe and multidimensional poverty for an extended period of time. The Chronic Poverty Report 2008–09 spotlighted the often overlooked social and non-income dimensions of poverty traps (CPRC, 2008), but in general, scholarship on chronic poverty has paid relatively limited attention to gender dynamics.

This report seeks to address this gap by placing girls and young women centre stage and highlighting ways in which context-specific social institutions determine their life opportunities and agency. 'Childhood,' 'adolescence,' 'youth' and 'adulthood' are to a significant extent socially constructed life-course junctures and, as a result, age ranges for each tend to vary considerably across cultures. For the sake of simplicity, we draw on internationally accepted definitions of childhood as extending from zero to 18 (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child {UNCRC}); adolescence from 10 to 19; and youth from 15 to 24 (UNFPA, 2007).

'Investing in adolescent girls is precisely the catalyst poor countries need to break intergenerational poverty and to create a better distribution of income'.

Our focus does not deny the importance of addressing poverty more broadly, for all population groups across the lifecycle. Rather, we seek to highlight girls' particular vulnerabilities in relation to poverty dynamics, which are different to those of boys and adult women. This is in part because of their relative powerlessness and the particularities of their life stage. We discuss how what happens at this critical time in their lives – especially the role of social institutions in shaping their opportunities – can reinforce their and their offspring's poverty status and influence their movement into or out of poverty. We pay equal attention to possible entry points for intervention, spotlighting a range of promising policies, programmes and practices that are emerging globally in an effort to reform and reshape discriminatory social institutions that hinder the realisation of girls' full human capabilities and risk trapping them in chronic poverty.

Chronic poverty and vulnerability using a gender and generational lens

Childhood, adolescence and early adulthood are critical in determining life-course potential, through physical and neurological development and social, educational and work skills attainment. Yet this remains for many

girls and young women a period of deprivation, danger and vulnerability, resulting in lack of agency and critical development deficits, often with life-course consequences (Box 1). More than 100 million girls will marry between 2005 and 2015,[3] with girls under 20 facing double the risk of dying during childbirth compared with women over 20, and girls under the age of 15 five times as likely to die as those in their 20s.[4] This leads to 60,000 to 70,000 girls aged 15 to 19 dying from complications of pregnancy and childbirth every year (Temin *et al.*, 2010).

Meanwhile, more than 130 million girls and women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C), mainly in Africa and the Middle East, and 2 million girls a year are at risk (UN, 2006). Moreover, over half of new HIV infections worldwide are occurring among young people aged between 15 and 24, and more than 60 percent of HIV-positive youth are female.[5] Two-thirds of the 137 million illiterate young people in the world are women (UNFPA, 2007), and in 2007, girls accounted for 54 percent of the world's out-of-school population (UN, 2009). Over 100 million girls aged between 5 and 17 are involved in child labour, with the majority engaged in hazardous work, including domestic service (ILO, 2009). As a result of the gendered division of labour, time poverty is a central feature of the lives of many girls and young women. In Mexico, for instance, girls spend 175 percent more time on household tasks than boys (Brunnich *et al.*, 2005). In a recent study of 35 countries, between 10 and 52 percent of women in all countries were found to have experienced physical violence at some point in their lives; of these, between 10 and 30 percent reported sexual violence (WHO, 2005).

In many cases, these intersecting experiences of deprivation, foregone human development opportunities and abuse or exploitation perpetuate and intensify the poverty of girls and women over the life-course, as the life history of a woman in her 50s in rural Ethiopia illustrates (Box 2).

Of note is the relatively limited attention paid to gender dynamics in scholarship on chronic poverty, especially vis-à-vis girls. The research that does consider gender tends to treat it (and often just sex) as one variable among many that increase vulnerability and exclusion.[6] Accordingly, there is frequent mention of the particular vulnerabilities facing female-headed households and widows, women's insecure asset and inheritance rights, intergenerational transmission of poverty by chronically poor women, socio-cultural expectations around marriage and dowry, and migration and mobility restrictions. But there is relatively little sustained treatment of gender as a specific site of disadvantage and social exclusion.[7]

In terms of specific research on girls' and adolescents' experiences of chronic poverty, the knowledge base is thinner still. There is, however, a fledgling body of work looking at linkages between poverty dynamics, education and care, as well as protection from exploitation and abuse,[8] on which this report builds.

Box 1: Multidimensional vulnerabilities faced by adolescent girls living in poverty

'If girls don't pass Grade 10, they generally don't retake the exam but instead sit at home and support the family and wait to get married. However, if guys don't succeed in education, they work in groups in trading activities. They have a good life – they get a job or can continue their education. Even if they start as daily labourers they can then earn enough money to trade in charcoal/wood. But girls, even if they earn 200-300 birr, this is usually absorbed by the family. They can't go off and be independent like guys [...] In my case I was lucky – I was underage when I was pressured to get married – but my brother-in-law gave me a loan to start my own business so I could refuse. He told me that the best way to avoid marriage was to have a shop which would give me status and then I could get married in the town. Men don't give you enough respect if your economic situation is weak' (adolescent girl, Ethiopia, 2009, in Jones *et al.*, 2010).

'I was taken out of school in fourth grade, when I was 17 or 18 [...] My uncles told my parents it was not worthwhile to let girls study [...] I cried and my parents yelled at me: "you only want to study for men." Then I started shepherding every day' (single mother, 25, Peru, in Vargas, 2010).

'Husbands are the ones who take care of great matters [such as loans], so I can't say much [...] He didn't tell me anything about the loan. He thinks a wife knows nothing. I didn't talk to him about the [loan repayment] deadline or the interest because it would make my husband's family worry too, and I was afraid it would upset him. He says I don't know anything so I couldn't ask. I was too afraid to ask him' (married woman, 19, Viet Nam, 2009, in Jones and Tran, 2010).

'It is difficult for girls to move freely outside the village because they may face rape. For instance, if I do not come back home early, there are a lot of problems that I may face since I am alone. That is why whenever I go to the market I always return home early (before 6pm)' (female adolescent, Ethiopia, 2009, in Jones *et al.*, 2010).

Catalysing change by investing in girls and young women

Investing in girls is one of the smartest moves a country can make. Today's girls will be half of tomorrow's adults, but investing in them offers returns that will go to all of humanity. MDG 2 calls for universal primary education by 2015 and, on a global level, tremendous progress has been made towards this. Nearly 90 percent of the world's children are enrolled in primary school (UN, 2010). However, this hides alarming disparities, both economic and gendered. The children most likely to be out of school are those living in the poorest regions of the world – South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa; in these regions, girls have even more limited access to education than boys (Lloyd and Young, 2009). The poorest girls are 3.5 times more likely to be out of school than the wealthiest girls, and the ratio grows in comparison with boys, reaching 4:1 (UN, 2010). Gender differences in secondary education remain large, and are even growing in the case of some sub-Saharan African countries. This is particularly problematic given that public investments in girls' secondary education are higher than both investments in their primary education and investments in boys' secondary education (Levine *et al.*, 2009).

Educating girls postpones marriage; reduces the risk of HIV/AIDS; increases family income; lowers eventual fertility; improves survival rates, health indicators and educational outcomes for future children; increases women's power in the household and political arenas; and lowers rates of domestic violence.[9] These returns accrue not only to individual women and their families. Communities with educated, empowered women are healthier, have more educational options and are less poor.[10] Furthermore, countries with educated, empowered women have stronger economic growth and higher gross national product (GNP) (Patrinos, 2008; Plan International, 2008). Klasen and Lammana (2009) found that gender gaps in South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa cost those regions up to 1.7 percent growth compared with East Asia. As such, the return on investment in girls offers a double dividend.

Girls who continue into secondary education tend to delay both marriage and sexual initiation.[11] One study

Box 2: Gender and chronic poverty across the life-course

'When I was a young girl my father died. My aunt took me to the burial and left me there telling me that she would take me back when school opens. In the meantime I could not get by – my siblings and I faced a difficult life in the countryside. So I decided to move to the town where I met a man who asked me if I would live with him and get a proper education like his children. I agreed and went with him. But he made me his servant and exploited me heavily and refused to send me to school. So I had to stop my schooling and worked as a servant for nine years.

I have had three unsuccessful marriages [...] When I married my second husband I relied on the rental house we had for baking bread for sale. But my husband later moved to the nearby town and sent me a message telling me "you can go anywhere with the child, but leave all the property." Then his father threw me out of the house I used for living and trading purposes. I sold all assets that I had and returned to my family's area.

During the last five years my house burnt down and I lost many assets. My [third] husband's brother gave us 1,600.00 birr to construct a house but my husband only built a small house. He is a drunken man and as a result he wasted some of the money. He said he would buy oxen with the remaining money but he has bought and sold oxen in the past and just wasted the money – I did not benefit from the proceeds.

I came to know my positive status of HIV/AIDS at the end of 2007. I think I was infected while I was providing care for my sister who had HIV/AIDS. Now my interaction with community members has decreased a bit because of their attitude towards my positive status [...] Because the safety net administrators know my HIV positive status they do not expect me to participate in the activities but some beneficiaries are not happy. I would like to participate if I was not sick [...] I also asked the kebele administrator why I wasn't given an ox as some community members were through the safety net program. And he responded that you [implying someone who is HIV positive] do not get oxen.

My son suffers from a mental illness. I planned to take him to get holy water, but I cannot because I do not have enough money. My daughter also has an eye problem: in the classroom she does not see the blackboard properly.

Now, I try to sell wood, grass, and use other sources of income to feed and buy second-hand clothes for my children. Now my hope is only to see the success of my children. Mine is already gone! I advise my children to focus on their education to save them from the challenges associated with dropping out, which I face' (married woman, Ethiopia, 2009).

Source: Jones *et al.* (2010).

found that young women with ten years of education were likely to marry up to six years later than their peers without schooling (Martin, 1995). Women with a secondary education have also been found to be three times less likely to be HIV positive (De Walque, 2004). Girls who stay in school and delay marriage also have a lower lifetime fertility rate (Lloyd and Young, 2009; Morrison and Sabarwal, 2008). Comparing women in developing countries with more than seven years of education with those with less than three years, translates into two or three fewer children per family (Plan International, 2009).

This lower fertility rate then cascades into multiple health advantages for women and their children. Delayed, less frequent pregnancy not only reduces maternal mortality, it also improves child survival rates (Lloyd and Young, 2009; Temin *et al.*, 2010). Women with education are twice as likely to immunise their children and far less likely to participate in FGM/C (Plan International, 2009). Their children are less likely to be stunted, underweight or anaemic (Herz and Sperling, 2004; World Bank, 2006). Moreover, an estimated 45 percent of the global decline in child malnutrition seen between 1970 and 1995 can be attributed to higher productivity directly related to female education (Smith and Haddad, 2000).

Educating girls also has a myriad of non-health advantages for their future families. More education translates into higher rates of employment, with commensurately higher wages (Lloyd and Young, 2009). Each extra year of education for a girl has been found to increase her income by 10 to 20 percent, with the completion of secondary school returning up to 25 percent (Psacharopoulas and Patrinos, 2004). Since women reinvest 90 percent of their income in the household, compared with men's 30 to 40 percent, the families of educated women are less likely to be poor. Education increases women's role in household decision making and their control over family assets (Lloyd and Young, 2009). Women's control of resources is in turn closely linked to their children's cognitive abilities, their eventual school attainment and their adult productivity (Hoddinott and Haddad, 1995). Domestic violence rates are also tightly linked to women's education. Evidence shows that Latin American and Asian women who are the least likely to have experienced violence are the most likely to have completed secondary school (Kishor and Johnson, 2004).

As noted above, as women expand their economic roles, communities experience more gender equality and economic prosperity (Lloyd and Young, 2009; World Bank, 2006). Educated women are more likely to participate in community fora, thus furthering not only the democratic

process but also political concerns that tend to improve the daily lives of families. For example, a study in Pakistan highlights how important local role models are to girls' success. Schools that were staffed with female teachers from the local community were found to have better retention rates than schools staffed with female teachers from outside the community (Ghuman and Lloyd, 2007), showing that each generation of girls is crucial to the success of the next.

More than 100 million girls will marry between 2005 and 2015, with girls under 20 facing double the risk of dying during childbirth compared with women over 20, and girls under age 15 are five times as likely to die as those in their 20s.

The impact of investing in girls and young women can also be seen at national and international levels. Declines in fertility, which reduce overall population growth and thus increase per capita income, coupled with a better educated, larger workforce, may produce rapid economic expansion (Levine *et al.*, 2009). For example, one study found that, if the female labour force participation in India were similar to that of the US, India's gross domestic product (GDP) would be lifted by 4.2 percent a year and its growth would be 1.08 percent higher (UNESCAP, 2007). In order to promote higher female economic participation, investing in gender-sensitive vocational training for young women is critical, as they often face a more protracted and difficult transition to working life compared with their male counterparts (ILO, 2008). The lack of decent job prospects increases their vulnerability in the transition from childhood to adulthood, often trapping them in 'informal, intermittent and insecure work arrangements, characterised by low productivity, meagre earnings and reduced labour protection' (ibid).

On average, countries with highly disparate educational enrolment rates have been estimated to have a GNP up to 25 percent lower than countries closer to achieving gender parity (Hill and King, 1995). Over time, it is predicted that this difference will continue to grow: an annual economic growth loss of 0.1 to 0.3 percent between 1995 and 2005 was expected to become an annual loss of 0.4 percent between 2005 and 2015 (Abu-Ghaida and Klasen, 2002). These seemingly small numbers aggregate to staggering sums. In addition to losing over $40 billion per year as a result of women's limited access to employment, the Asia Pacific region alone is losing up to $30 billion per year as a result of gaps in education (UNESCAP, 2007). Moreover, given that girls constitute part of the current demographic bulge, characterised by a relatively large number of young people of working age, ensuring that these young people are educated, healthy and gainfully employed leads to what some term a 'demographic dividend' and can make a major contribution to development (Marcus and Gavrilovic, 2010). When it comes to investing in tomorrow's women, it is obvious that ignorance is expensive.

The importance of social institutions

Poverty research has historically focused on material manifestations of poverty (measured by income and basic human development indicators such as educational enrolment and nutritional status). However, the role that social risks and vulnerabilities play in perpetuating chronic poverty and propelling people into poverty has gained recognition over the past decade (Holmes and Jones, 2009). Of the five poverty traps identified by the Chronic Poverty Report 2008–09, four are non-income measures: insecurity (ranging from insecure environments to conflict and violence); limited citizenship (lack of meaningful political voice); spatial disadvantage (exclusion from politics, markets, resources, etc, owing to geographical remoteness); and social discrimination (which traps people in exploitative relationships of power and patronage) (CPRC, 2008). Accordingly, in this report we focus on social institutions – the collection of formal and informal laws, norms and practices that have an effect on human capabilities by either limiting or enabling individual and collective agency. These social institutions, we suggest, have far greater influence on developmental outcomes than is generally appreciated.

Social institutions can and should enhance human capabilities; when they do not, they must be addressed and action taken to either reform or overhaul them.

International development action over the past 50 years has generally treated social institutions as fixed and largely untouchable, either looking to science and technology to modernise societies or focusing on free markets (misguidedly seen as devoid of social aspects) to bring about change (Rao and Walton, 2004; Attaran, 2005;

Ferguson, 1994). This has been reinforced by a tendency in poverty research to focus on material manifestations of poverty: it is only more recently that social risks and vulnerabilities have been considered. Sen (2004) suggests that this neglect, or what he terms 'comparative indifference' to the importance of 'the social,' needs remedying.

Laws, norms and practices are part of the wider 'cultures' that inform multiple aspects of our behaviour and our societies. Importantly, culture is not an untouchable and permanent fixture. Rather, it is always in flux and contested, constantly being shaped by human interaction (Rao and Walton, 2004). Indeed, this malleability is a vital aspect of the transformative social change required to enable equitable development and social justice (Box 3). Such change has been seen in many societies and is central to inclusive policies and action. However, it is critical to emphasise that cultural norms and practices can endure across time and space by adapting to new contexts, including demographic, socioeconomic and technological changes. For example, traditional practices of female infanticide in some societies are increasingly being replaced by female foeticide, facilitated by the availability of new reproductive technologies, especially among better-off wealth quintiles.

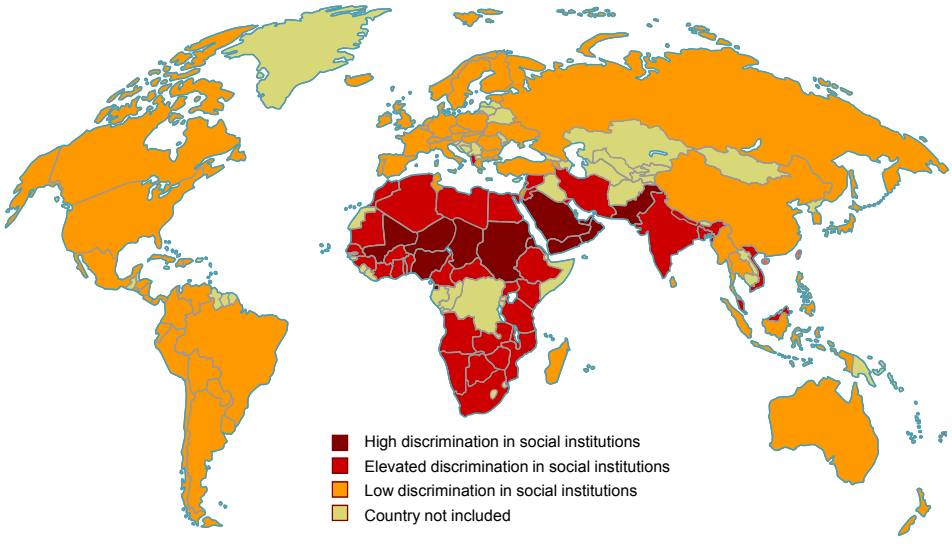
Importantly, social institutions are not inherently good or bad. Rather, they provide the social parameters within which individuals and groups are able to develop their human capabilities. When they result in processes that lead to inequality, discrimination and exclusion, they become detrimental to development. Thus, our argument is that social institutions can and should enhance human capabilities; when they do not, they must be addressed and action taken to either reform or overhaul them. Those institutions we focus on in this report are currently detrimental to gender equality, to the empowerment of girls and young women and to the realisation of their and their children's full human potential.

In analysing the situation of girls, we focus on social impediments to the realisation of their capabilities, which also result in material deprivation. Too often, policy-makers, donors and development practitioners focus on supply-side measures, such as provision of services and technologies, but overlook the importance of informing the choice of intervention with a clear analysis of the socio-cultural dynamics that may impede the uptake and effective enjoyment of service benefits (e.g. Sen and Ostlin, 2010). Even development approaches that seek to strengthen demand, pay limited attention to the complexity of social factors that may influence demand patterning, as the growing body of work on gender and social protection initiatives highlights (e.g. Holmes and Jones, 2010; Molyneux, 2008).

Box 3: Social institutions and human capabilities

An appreciation of the importance of social issues and institutions and wider culture in development has been advanced, now famously, by Amartya Sen (1999; 2004), whereby such institutions constitute part of the 'capabilities' that societies and people have. Culture matters not just because it is a 'constitutive part of the good life,' but also because it has an 'instrumental influence on the behaviours of individuals, firms and governments' (Sen, 2004). This translation of 'social' aspects of development into economic terminology has enabled a much wider understanding of its potential influence in development action. Social institutions are important because they are part of a wider culture which defines 'what is valued in terms of wellbeing, who does the valuing and why economic and social factors interact with culture to unequally allocate access to a good life' (Rao and Walton, 2004).

Figure 1: Levels of gendered social discrimination in developing countries



Source: http://genderindex.org

Gender, social institutions and poverty dynamics

The social institutions that concern us are those that hinder girls' and young women's agency, limit their capabilities and influence the possibility of them falling into long-term poverty. We focus on five specific institutions identified by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI). These include discriminatory family codes and resource entitlements, son bias, gender-based violence and restricted freedoms in terms of mobility and participation. Practices stemming from these institutions may result in development deficits and/or physical and psychological trauma, such as early marriage, inequitable inheritance, FGM/C, assault and abuse, limited access to productive assets, servitude and exploitation, high rates of infant and maternal malnutrition, morbidity and mortality and low educational achievement, among others (Amnesty International, 2010; Plan International, 2009). These barriers to human development can lead to and perpetuate chronic poverty and vulnerability over the course of childhood and adulthood, and potentially intergenerationally. We contend that efforts to reform or reshape these social institutions will contribute substantially towards improving development outcomes in general, and the multidimensional well-being of girls and young women in particular.

The SIGI is led by the OECD Development Centre and a team headed by Stephan Klasen from Göttingen University. It aims to address the weaknesses of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) created in the mid-1990s, and to create a new composite index of gender equality (Jutting *et al.*, 2008). SIGI architects are primarily interested in highlighting the relationship between social institutions – defined as laws, norms, traditions and codes of conduct – and women's economic empowerment. The approach is informed by Morrisson and Jutting (2004), who argue that social institutions are the most important single factor determining women's freedom of choice in economic activities outside the household, directly and indirectly constraining women's access to resources such as education and health care, which are necessary for women's economic participation (see also Figure 1).

This report appreciates the SIGI's focus on socio-cultural norms, codes of conduct and formal and informal laws and uses the quantitative data that it generates as one data point among a number of sources. It also seeks to broaden and modify the conceptualisation of gendered social institutions that underpins the SIGI. First, the SIGI refers only to women, whereas we believe it is important to extend this to cover girls, where data are available. Second, we go beyond the SIGI's narrow focus on economic benefits to consider a broader definition of well-being, one which captures a range of capabilities and outcomes as well as the complexities of supporting girls and women to both avoid and exit from chronic poverty. Third, we address inconsistencies in the labelling of the five social institutions that the SIGI comprises. The terminology used is neutral for some SIGI institutions (family code), positive for others (physical integrity, ownership rights, civil liberties) and negative for yet others (son preference). We have relabelled them, and also modified some of the component variables, in order to better capture the range of norms and practices that underpin them (Table 1).[12]

Table 1: Definitions and key features of gendered social institutions

Social institution	Definition	Key features
Discriminatory family codes	Family codes which have gender-discriminatory provisions	Parental authority, inheritance laws, early marriage practices, family structure and resulting rights and responsibilities (including polygamy, multigenerational households, female-headed households)
Son bias	Unequal investments in care, nurture and resources allocated to sons and daughters within the household	Survival/mortality rates, human development indicators (nutrition, education, health), time use, household labour contributions to care and mainstream economies
Limited resource rights and entitlements	Girls' and young women's access to, control over and ownership of resources compared with boys and men	Land, microfinance, property, natural resources
Physical insecurity	Vulnerability to gender-based violence	Gender-based violence in the household, school, workplace and community, and harmful gendered traditional practices, such as FGM/C
Restrcited civil liberties	Restricted civil liberties based on gender	Restrictions on freedom of movement, freedom of association and participation in collective action[13]

Organisation of the report

The report is organised according to the five key social institutions outlined in Table 1. Each chapter follows a similar format, including: 1) a discussion of the characteristics of the social institution, its gendered dimensions, its linkages to poverty dynamics and its impacts on girls and young women; and 2) a review of promising policies and programmes aimed at tackling the discriminatory dimensions of the social institution. In this vein, we highlight that social institutions are constantly undergoing change. This process may be slow, uneven and even suffer from reversals in some contexts, but the evidence underscores that positive change for girls and young women is possible, even in the most challenging socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. There are multiple agents of change, from girls themselves, to their mothers, brothers and fathers, to the wider community, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the state and international actors. Movements for girls' and women's rights have played an important part, including in advocacy efforts around CEDAW, the UNCRC, the Beijing Platform for Action and Convention 135. And there are multiple approaches: public education campaigns, use of media and TV drama, school curriculum reforms, litigation, legal literacy, empowerment programmes focused on girls, change initiatives involving men and boys, policy advocacy, peer support and mentoring, use of champions and role models and social protection measures, among others.

The report concludes with key lessons learnt as well as a set of policy recommendations. We hope these will inspire debate and discussion among an array of development actors and, most importantly, action for transformative change and gender justice for all.

Key findings

As girls and young women become more visible in debates and action, it is critical that policy and programme design are informed by a deeper understanding of the discriminatory social institutions that constrain their life opportunities and the exercise of their full human agency. This report underscores the importance of taking social institutions and culture seriously to better tackle the poverty traps facing girls and young women – not only in childhood and early adulthood, but also potentially across their life-course and that of their children. Girls' and young women's experiences of poverty and vulnerability are multidimensional, and often intersect with other forms of social exclusion, such as caste, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or spatial disadvantage. This complexity needs to be better understood by research, policy and development practitioner communities alike. At the same time, there is compelling evidence that progressive social change is possible, although much more needs to be done to take promising initiatives to scale, as well as to effectively monitor, evaluate and learn from such experiences cross-nationally.

The report recognises that, because of the context specificity of social institutions, different models of change will be essential in different places and at different times. Nonetheless, it identifies a number of crosscutting findings about the linkages between gendered social institutions and girls' and young women's experiences of chronic poverty. These inform the report's recommendations for action, which are inspired by some of the effective policy, programming and advocacy approaches discussed in the individual chapters.

Positive change for girls and young women is possible, even in the most challenging socio-cultural, political and economic contexts.

First, as discussed earlier, the recent focus in development circles on girls and young women is clearly very positive. It does, however, present a number of analytical and programming challenges:

- Gender- and age-disaggregated data on girls' poverty experiences over time in developing country contexts are very limited, constraining well-tailored policy and programme interventions. Longitudinal research initiatives such as the Department for International Development (DFID)-funded *Young Lives* and Plan's *Real Choices, Real Lives* cohort study are important exceptions, but both suffer from a number of limitations.[14] In the case of adolescents and youth, the data gaps are more pressing still: these age groupings are often not easily identifiable in national household surveys.
- Within international legal and human rights frameworks, female youth in particular are not well covered (either in the UNCRC or in CEDAW). There is a clear need for thinking about the specificities of poverty and vulnerabilities facing this age group, and the specific measures that need to be developed or strengthened to protect them from the poverty traps besetting them at this stage of the life-course.

- Definitions and understandings of childhood, adolescence and youth vary considerably according to cultural context. There is a need to pay more attention to these differences, and to the challenges (especially in terms of legal frameworks) and opportunities they present for development interventions.
- It is also important to consider in more depth the specific poverty and vulnerability experiences of boys and young men, and in particular the role that they can play in dismantling gender discriminatory social institutions (see Box 4).

Our analysis highlights that debates about chronic poverty would be enriched by more systematic attention to gender dynamics, both within and outside the household, and by analysis of how these play out over the lifecycle, starting with infancy and childhood (see Table 2). Understanding how the experiences of girls and boys, young women and men are in turn shaped by other social categories, especially ethnicity, caste, urban/rural locality, disability and sexuality, would further enhance our knowledge base on poverty traps and strengthen our collective ability to support individuals and groups to break out of these.

Putting gender and girls centre stage in development dialogues is key, but the particular contribution of this report lies in spotlighting the pivotal role that culturally specific social institutions play in shaping development outcomes. Although it is widely accepted that gender is a social construct imbued with power relations, too often there is a disconnect with policy and programme development. In other words, if we want to promote progressive social change, we need to think carefully about how best to reform discriminatory social institutions which shape the realm of the possible for girls, their families and communities. Indeed, in the lead up to 2015, 'culture' and 'the social' need to become much more visible components of debates on the MDGs and on post-MDG frameworks. These concepts need to be explored more fully, and more work is needed to develop a clearer operational definition, drawing on insights from the broader social sciences and informed by interdisciplinary approaches. Strengthening voices and interpretations from within various cultural and social traditions and from the perspectives of women and

Box 4: Reshaping masculinities

A growing number of initiatives aimed at tackling gender-based violence are focusing on reshaping traditional masculinities, as the following examples highlight.

Program H (homens is 'men' in Portuguese) originated in Brazil with the aim of providing alternative masculine norms for young men, and has since been adapted to other countries. In India, the programme has been piloted as Yaari-Dosti ('Friendship/Bonding between Men') with young low-income men. Given that India has the second largest population of HIV/AIDS globally, and that young people aged 15 to 24 account for 37 percent of those who are HIV positive, tackling traditional gender norms and aggressive masculinity is critical to reducing risks among both young men and women. The programme seeks to challenge and change attitudes in Mumbai towards gender relations and child care, reproductive health, condom use and partner, family and community violence. A pilot evaluation found that, compared with the initial 36 percent, only 9 percent of men continued to believe that a woman should tolerate violence; 3 percent agreed that beating a wife who refuses sex was a male right (28 percent); 35 percent continued to believe that child care was a maternal responsibility (63 percent); and 11 percent said that a man should have the final word in household decisions (24 percent). Sexual violence against partners had also declined, from 51 to 39 percent (Verma *et al.*, 2006).

A Family Planning Association Bangladesh programme in impoverished Comilla district is educating local men about women's rights, illustrating how violent behaviour is transmitted across the generations. According to one male participant: 'I realised through the training that when I stopped my wife from going outside alone, didn't provide enough food, or was abusive to her, all were acts of violence [...] it will never happen again.' The project also raises awareness of domestic violence among women through peer educators chosen from communities. Legal representation is offered and training and loans are also provided to help women set up small businesses and achieve economic independence and greater bargaining power. So far, the programme has contributed to lower levels of domestic violence, prosecution of abusers and greater female confidence, independence and respect within these communities.

Ethiopia's Addis Birhan ('New Light') uses a discussion group approach targeted at married men in more than 100 rural villages. Trained male mentors hold weekly meetings at community level with groups of young men, who are given information and hold dialogues on gender relationships, caring for children and family, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and domestic violence. Participants report that the meetings have enabled more open discussions at home and have helped them change their thinking on gender norms. The first survey undertaken among husbands and married adolescent girls showed considerable improvements in gender relations and increased male involvement in household tasks and support within the household.

Source: www.dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/Case-Studies/2010/Bangladesh-abuse; Erulkar and Alemayehu (2009); Verma *et al.* (2006).

Table 2: Girl's vulnerabilities to chronic poverty

Across the course of childhood and beyond
• Poverty is a dynamic process which impacts on individuals and groups with differing levels of intensity according to their stage in the lifecycle. • Girls' vulnerability can begin even before they are born. Prevailing patterns of son preference linked in part to parental expectations about differential influence on poverty dynamics can lead to gender-selective foeticide. • From infancy, girls may be subject to lower parental investments in their care and nurture, and from early childhood to higher demands on their time and labour. • Adolescent girls in particular are subject to a specific set of poverty dynamics. Although no longer children (in the eyes of their community), they generally lack intra-household decision-making power, legal representation, economic power, asset entitlements and community and political voice. Without adequate adult support, this can intensify their potential to fall into poverty, as well as limit options for exiting it. • Adolescent girls/young women are, however, subject to the dichotomy of also being considered adult – expected to participate in adult practices such as marriage and childbearing before their full physical and psychological development and before they have established an independent livelihood.
Intergenerational poverty transfers
• Early childbirth impacts not only a girl's own well-being (through the physical dangers associated with young childbearing, associated medical costs, time poverty owing to care responsibilities, limited economic opportunities owing to foregone human capital development opportunities, etc, all leading to a downward poverty dynamic), but also the well-being and development of her children. Girls' nutrition is directly linked to infant nutrition and health, and girls' education levels in particular can have critical impacts on their offspring's nutrition, health and education, as well as their vulnerability to harmful traditional practices. • Girls' comparative lack of economic, legal and community standing means that they are dependent on others, and their children even more so. In the event of divorce or widowhood, this insecurity becomes even more apparent, as non-inheritance of assets can render them and their dependants even more asset insecure and heighten the risk of intergenerational poverty transfer. • Marriage in youth can impact on a girl's intra-marriage bargaining power (often determined by her bride wealth/dowry/assets), thereby determining her monetary control and power over assets or household expenditure and her potential for inheritance or management of assets. • Girls' lack of community voice and political participation means that they have very limited outlets to represent themselves or their children outside of the family sphere.
Long-term poverty
• Chronic poverty can be brought about by adverse incorporation into social structures like early marriage. • Discriminatory livelihood practices or systemic market inequalities mean that girls are often forced into adverse employment – informal, insecure and lacking any social protection benefits. • Assetlessness through persistent discriminatory socio-cultural traditions like patrilocalism is another key source of vulnerability for girls and women. • Physical risks which disproportionately affect girls are embedded within this, i.e. sexual violence resulting in childbirth, feminisation of diseases like HIV/AIDS, etc.

girls themselves is also critical to gaining a fuller and more contextual understanding of how cultural forces and social institutions are experienced, as well as how dynamics of change may occur.

In this regard, we recognise the important role that the SIGI is playing in helping to jumpstart a debate around these key issues of culture and discriminatory social institutions. Rather than treating culture and 'the social' as spigot variables that can be turned on and off when other explanatory frameworks fail, the SIGI signals the need for a more systematic approach. However, as we emphasise throughout the report, much more is needed, including:

- Understanding how social institutions affect boys and girls, adolescents, men and women throughout the lifecycle;
- Recognising the effects that social institutions have, not just on economic participation, but also on well-being more generally;
- Expanding the consideration of social institutions to encompass a broader range of gender discriminatory norms, practices and formal and informal laws across family, religion, state and the market (including exclusionary male networks which shape economic and political opportunities, the gender-segmented nature of the labour market, especially the informal sector);
- Paying greater attention to potential Western bias in the construction of the SIGI sub-indices and involving more Southern voices in the index's critique and (re-) evaluation;

- Encouraging equal or greater investment in complementing quantifiable indicators with more nuanced qualitative analyses/assessments so as to avoid reductionist approaches.

Recommendations for action

Given the complex patterning of girls' and young women's experiences of vulnerability and chronic poverty, policies and programmes that address both the immediate and longer-term causes and consequences of gender discrimination are critical. Gender discrimination is a deeply embedded social construct that manifests itself in different ways at different times and in different contexts – affecting attitudes and belief structures or ideologies that often permeate and help shape institutional arrangements for governance, production and reproduction. Action is necessary at all levels, by a broad array of actors – not only the state. As decades of struggle in the women's movement have shown, such attitudes cannot be legislated away, or erased by enlightened policy alone: rather, they require continuous movement of social actors operating at different levels and by different means.

Enlightened teachers in progressive educational systems have shaped attitudes and outcomes in schools; media attention to social injustices resulting from gender discrimination shines a powerful public light on behaviours and practices that often thrive in private; private sector involvement in efforts to enhance productivity through approaches aimed at expanding the capabilities of all workers can help transform our productive spheres; and collective action by women and girls, with men and boys as allies, has been a powerful tool to advance common goals and transform social structures and expectations. Governments must set the stage, of course, through appropriate legislation and enforcement; through policies promoting and supporting social equity; and through support for expanded civil liberties, representation and participation in public affairs. But it is only through a conjunction of efforts and strategic partnerships, facilitated by effective coordination mechanisms, that broad-based change can come about.

In developing a vision for a multipronged approach of this nature, many of the policy recommendations that emerged from the Chronic Poverty Report 2008–09 are pertinent. These include: developing public services for the hard to reach; promoting individual and collective assets; expanding social protection; strengthening measures for anti-discrimination and empowerment; and addressing migration and strategic urbanisation. However, this report highlights the importance of paying more in-depth attention to age and gender dynamics if these policy approaches are to reach the poorest and most vulnerable. Approaches that overlook the multidimensionality of gendered and generational experiences of chronic poverty and vulnerability are more likely to flounder and to fail to support girls and young women in new pathways to empowerment. Moreover, families and wider communities are likely to miss out on the potential multiplier effects of investing in girls and achieving development goals more broadly.

To tackle chronic poverty more effectively and to promote progressive social change, the report's findings support the following recommendations for policy, programming and advocacy action:

1. **Develop and enforce context-sensitive legal provisions to eliminate gender discrimination in the family, school, workplace and community.**

   - As our report's findings show, legal reforms to harmonise national legal frameworks with international commitments to gender equality (especially CEDAW and the Beijing Platform) are critical, as is ensuring that customary laws and codes are harmonised with more formal legislative approaches.
   - Such reforms should include: bans on sex-selective abortion; promotion of gender equality frameworks; gender-based violence prevention, penalisation and rehabilitation; reform of family codes, including age of marriage and inheritance laws; expansion of birth registration; etc.
   - Equal attention is required to ensure that gender-sensitive laws are enforced, including through enhanced monitoring efforts and capacity development for police and judicial personnel.
   - Attitudinal changes among girls/boys and women/men are also critical and require innovative approaches, informed by a careful understanding of cultural dynamics and sensitivities. These can include: legal literacy for officials and communities; creative use of media; support for role models; alliances with traditional authority structures and – in the case of harmful traditional practices – identification of champions to introduce alternative cultural rites; measures aimed at building self-esteem, including through girls' involvement in sport; development of girl-friendly schools and community centres as important arenas for attitude formation and change, etc.

2. **Support measures to promote children's and especially girls' right to be heard and to participate in decisions in areas of importance to them.**
   - Empowerment programmes for adolescent girls, which provide a 'safe space' to participate in decision making, including through girls' movements, microfinance groups, etc, emerge as a key approach to promoting girls' voice and agency in the report (see Box 5). The sustainability and impact of such initiatives can be enhanced through measures to address demand- and supply-side barriers to girls' education (see Recommendations 3, 4 and 6 in particular).
   - Issues of particular importance within such initiatives include: girls' perspectives on climate change and the environment; school-to-work transition opportunities; reproductive health concerns; and experiences of gender-based violence within the family, school and community.
   - The involvement of mentors to form and structure such participation is equally important, especially for girls and young women who have had limited or no education and/or exposure beyond their home environment.
   - Programmes targeting girls should be complemented by educational programmes for boys and young men. This is especially important in the area of gender-based violence, to dismantle aggressive understandings and practices of masculinity and to raise awareness on different ways of relating to girls and women within and outside the family.
   - Participatory research initiatives should be encouraged so as to promote fuller articulation of different voices in development debates and in the design of policies and programmes.
3. **Invest in the design and implementation of child- and gender-sensitive social protection.**
   - There is strong evidence that social protection can be a powerful tool to mitigate the worst effects of both economic and social risks and to promote pathways out of poverty. Child- and gender-sensitive social protection in particular can support investments in girls' human capital development and minimise deficits in their protection from exploitation, abuse and neglect.
   - It is essential, therefore, that care be taken to integrate a gender and age lens into the design,

implementation and monitoring and evaluation of such programmes. Selection of a particular social protection instrument should begin with a systematic assessment of contextualised gender- and child-specific vulnerabilities. Women and girls should also be included in the design and implementation of social protection measures.

- Demand-side initiatives to promote girls' schooling and delay marriage and childrearing appear to be especially effective. These include: cash transfers; school feeding programmes; take-home supplements for girls (such as cooking oil); and girls' scholarship programmes.
- Cash transfers with embedded awareness-raising components can also be a useful mechanism to empower parents and communities to protect their children – particularly daughters – from the risks of harmful forms of early marriage, child labour (especially domestic work, which girls disproportionately take on) and human trafficking.
- Social health protection, including social health insurance and health fee exemptions, is another critical approach to minimising the barriers to girls' access to and uptake of health services.
- Asset transfers (e.g. small livestock such as goats) can help build young women's productive asset base and are an important means to support their economic participation and eventual independence. Protective measures to enhance young women's ability to utilise and conserve such assets are an important part of such efforts, and include technical assistance as well as organisational support.
- Public works programmes which create infrastructure designed to reduce female time poverty (such as fuel and water collection points) are also to be encouraged.

4. **Strengthen services for girls who are hard to reach, because of both spatial disadvantage and age- and gender-specific socio-cultural barriers.**

- Promoting coverage of the 'hard to reach' typically focuses on spatial disadvantage, i.e. those who are marginalised through remote or hostile geographic locations. This report underscores the importance of expanding this concept to include girls who too often remain hard to reach because of socio-cultural barriers, especially those that restrict mobility and limit public participation in community affairs.
- Initiatives aimed at promoting girls' access to and use of existing services need to focus on innovative and gender-sensitive means of extending: microfinance, vocational training and income-generating opportunities; health and especially reproductive health services; nutrition support; education; legal and paralegal services; and protection from abuse, exploitation and neglect (such as shelters, counselling).
- Provision of affordable, culturally appropriate and accessible child care services is also critical, not only for young mothers but also for girls who often shoulder the care work burden of younger siblings at the cost of educational achievement.
- Greater efforts are also needed to bring services to girls, especially because of the vulnerabilities that many face in the spaces where they spend most of their time (families and schools), but also because of the mobility

Box 5: Empowering girls through livelihood and life skills

Kishori Abhijan ('Adolescent Girls' Adventure') has offered livelihood skills (including life skills, savings account options, access to credit and vocational training); mentoring to develop self-esteem and leadership skills; and training in health and nutrition, legislation and legal rights and gender equality to 15,000 adolescent girls in three districts of rural Bangladesh. The programme is implemented by two national NGOs – the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and the Centre for Mass Education and Science (Amin and Suran, 2005). An evaluation showed the following results: increased employment; improved school enrolment; delayed marriage; improved health knowledge; and enhanced mobility reducing social isolation. The life skills component has been scaled up to enrol more than 250,000 girls in 58 districts.

A separate adolescent microcredit initiative, Employment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA), operated by BRAC with financial assistance from the Nike Foundation, covers another 230,000 girls (Amin, 2007). In addition to credit, ELA provides participants with skills training for income generation, books for extracurricular reading, equipment for indoor games and a space to socialise to build confidence and social skills. An assessment indicated that interventions had helped reduce early marriage, promote economic activities and increase mobility and involvement in extracurricular reading (Shahnaz and Karim, 2008). Girls who received specific skills training used their loans for income generation (poultry raising, marketing) as well as for social investment (savings for pensions, education and future marriage). Some noted ambitious plans: 'We have plans to invest the surplus money in business and buy land and a house. We have one house but want another one. We also want to save up so that we can pay for our own dowry' (ibid).

constraints that may limit their access to available services. Initiatives can include: ensuring that schools are closer to communities so as to minimise the risk of physical violence; supporting the development of a female teaching corps; creating safe spaces for girls in communities; and offering home-based or mobile services, such as visiting health care workers or female agricultural extension workers.

- In the design and delivery of such services, our analysis suggests that it is essential to be aware of other forms of social exclusion which may compound gender-related exclusion (e.g. caste or ethnicity, disability, sexuality), and ensure that service delivery approaches are tailored accordingly.

5. **Support measures to strengthen girls' and young women's individual and collective ownership of, access to and use of resources.**

- Strengthening girls' and young women's ownership of, access to and use of resources, especially in terms of inheritance and physical resources (water, land, energy sources), is critical to promoting their empowerment as well as to reducing their time poverty and vulnerability to violence and exploitation.
- Our report's findings highlight that, given their relative powerlessness and severe resource constraints, collective access to resources may be especially important for girls and young women, for example in access to financial services, land and collateral.
- Collective approaches can also be powerful in helping girls to gain confidence with and through each other and to develop a sense of agency often denied them in the family, where they are too frequently viewed less as individuals with assets than as assets themselves (as a labour supply source, as upholders of the family honour, etc).
- A collective approach, supported by strong mentors, can also promote information sharing, self-esteem, capability development and social capital. In other words, it is critical that empowerment approaches have an emphasis on the relational and not only on the individual.

6. **Strengthen efforts to promote girls' and women's physical integrity and control over their bodies, especially in conflict and post-conflict settings.**

- Given the potential multiplier effects of girls' education and delaying marriage and childbirth, our findings underscore the importance of investing in the provision of culturally sensitive, affordable and accessible reproductive health information and service provision. Efforts should include innovative approaches that work through girls' and young women's self-help groups, as well as initiatives that involve men (and especially young men) as partners.
- Programmes to raise public awareness about the problems of female foeticide in high prevalence countries, especially drawing on multimedia approaches with the potential to reach a broad cross-section of the public, are also essential if entrenched gender discriminatory attitudes are to be effectively uprooted.
- Educational and empowerment programmes that raise girls' and young women's awareness of their right to be protected from violence in all spheres and to seek redress in cases of violence are critical, not only from a human rights and justice standpoint but also in terms of harnessing the broader development synergies from investing in female education, nutrition, health and economic participation.
- Efforts to counter the culture of impunity surrounding gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict settings are vital. These should be informed by context-specific understandings of the political economy dimensions of gender-based violence.
- Involving girls and young women in age- and gender-sensitive disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes is critical to promote their rehabilitation and potential psychosocial healing.

Notes

1 The new UN Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women), to be launched in early 2011, will absorb the functions of existing UN bodies addressing gender issues (the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the less well-known Office of the Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues (OSAGI), Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE)).

2 World Bank/International Monetary Fund Annual Meetings: Adolescent Girls Initiative Launch. World Bank President Robert B. Zoellic, October 10, 2008. See http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/ORGANIZATION/EXTPRESIDENT2007/0,,contentMDK:21936128~menuPK:64822279~pagePK:64821878~piPK:64821912~theSitePK:3916065,00.html

3 Based on girls aged 10 to 19 in developing countries, excluding China, projected to marry before their 18th birthday (Clark, 2004). www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/presskit/factsheets/facts_child_marriage.htm.

4 See www.wpf.org/reproductive_rights_article/facts.

5 See www.unifem.org/gender_issues/hiv_aids/facts_figures.php.

6 See e.g. Bhide and Mehta (2008); Silver (2007).

7 Important exceptions include work by Cooper (2010) and Quisumbing (2007) on assets and inheritance; by Hickey (2009) on the gendered and gendering nature of citizenship; by the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC, 2008) on the importance of women's movements and collective action; by Doane (2007) on the importance of improving working conditions for women; and by Moore *et al.* (2008) on linkages between gender and conflict.

8 See Cramer (2008); De Coninck and Drani (2009); Moore (2005); Moore *et al.* (2008); Quisumbing (2007); Rose and Dyer (2008).

9 See e.g. Grown (2005); Lloyd and Young (2009); Plan International (2009).

10 See e.g. Levine *et al.* (2009); Lloyd and Young (2009); World Bank (2006).

11 See e.g. Lloyd and Young (2009); Mathur *et al.* (2003); Morrison and Sabarwal (2008).

12 Given the SIGI's focus on quantitative measurement, these institutions and their constituent components have been shaped in part by data availability and face a number of limitations. Accordingly, because our analysis draws on a range of quantitative and qualitative sources, we do not need to be subject to the same set of constraints.

13 Note that we did not focus in any detail on freedom of dress, as addressing the complexities of this issue would require longer and more in-depth treatment, and would entail potential problems of Western bias.

14 The Young Lives Project to date has paid relatively little attention to gender dynamics, although there is potential for more work on the basis of the dataset. It is also present in only four countries: Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam. The Plan study, despite providing scope for a more in-depth gendered analysis, has only a very small sample (135 girls from 9 countries).

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The Chronic Poverty Research Centre

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Stemming girls' chronic poverty

Catalysing development change by building just social institutions

Childhood, adolescence and early adulthood remain for many girls and young women a period of deprivation, danger and vulnerability, resulting in lack of agency and critical development deficits. What happens at this crucial time in girls' and young women's lives can also reinforce their poverty status and that of their offspring, as well as influencing their movement into or out of poverty. In many cases, overlapping experiences of deprivation, foregone human development opportunities and abuse or exploitation perpetuate and intensify poverty for girls and young women over the life-course.

Recently – in part because of the child focus of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the 2007 World Development Report – there has been growing attention on the need to include girls (and boys) more prominently in development agendas. How to do this effectively, however, remains under-researched, especially in debates around chronic poverty, which have in general paid relatively limited attention to gender dynamics.

This report addresses this gap by placing girls and young women centre stage, highlighting ways in which five context-specific social institutions inform and determine their life opportunities and agency. Based on the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), these are: discriminatory family codes, son bias, limited resource rights and entitlements, physical insecurity and restricted civil liberties. We discuss the characteristics of each social institution, its gendered dimensions, its linkages to poverty dynamics and its impacts on girls and young women.

We balance this with a review of promising policies and programmes aimed at tackling the discriminatory dimensions of these institutions. Social institutions are constantly undergoing change. The process may be slow, uneven and even suffer from reversals in some contexts, but the evidence that we present underscores that positive change for girls and young women is possible, even in the most challenging socio-cultural, political and economic contexts.

Chronic Poverty Research Centre

The CPRC is an international partnership of universities, research institutes and NGOs. The CPRC aims to provide research, analysis and policy guidance to stimulate national and inter-national debate so that people in chronic poverty will have a greater say in the formulation of policy and a greater share in the benefits of progress.

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