

SUMMARY OCTOBER 2016

## SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW:

THE EVOLVING SOCIAL NORMS OF CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE



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**COVER IMAGE:** Mothers Clubs in Nepal were valuable participants in understanding the social norm of child, early and forced marriage in their communities.

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Our safeguarding policy prevents us from showing the faces of any girls affected by early marriage. All images used were taken with permission from similar contexts and are not linked to the specific stories in this report. All quotes displayed in this report were given anonymously and are attributable by gender, age and location only.

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# Acronyms

ADAPT	Analysis, Design and Planning Tool
ADP	Area Development Program
CEFM	Child Early and Forced Marriage
CP	Child protection
CPA	Child Protection and Advocacy
CPC	Child Protection Committee
DFID	Department For International Development
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting
HTP	Harmful Traditional practice
ICT	Information and communication technology
IICRD	International Institute for Child Rights and Development
MVC	Most Vulnerable Children
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PPA	Program Partnership Agreement
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOL	Social Opinion Leader
ToC	Theory of Change
WV	World Vision



Community members like David are critical stakeholders in achieving change in social norms, and positively impacting the lives of children.

# Executive Summary

The following report is the final outcome of a research consultancy conducted by the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD), Dr. Philip Cook and Rebecah Nelems; and Columbia University, Dr. Mike Wessells, for World Vision UK (WV). The research mandate is to assess and analyse the influence of World Vision's child protection programming in reducing the harmful traditional customary practice of early marriage<sup>1</sup>, and to change the underlying social norms that drive such practices.

The research purpose is to better understand the role of social norms change, particularly the process and outcomes, as it relates to changing harmful traditional customary practices, and to World Vision's Theory of Change<sup>2</sup>.

The research focused on two country child protection programmes; one current (Nepal) and one completed in 2014 (Uganda). By understanding the role of social norms change and World Vision's Theory of Change this research intended to shed light on enhancing positive socio-cultural capital supporting child safety and wellbeing.

At its most basic, social norms can be understood as either "what most people think and do" (empirical beliefs) or; alternatively, "what individuals believe most people think and do" (normative beliefs).<sup>3</sup> Social norms approach has grown from its initial use in public health and health promotion into the field of international development where social norms change has become a key methodology in interventions to change community's knowledge, attitudes and practices concerning a particular subject. The social norms approach has been used in child protection to tackle harmful traditional practice issues such as Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) and Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM).

World Vision has finished a first phase of research in implementing a World Vision regional East African child protection Theory of Change (ToC). This research highlights the importance of understanding the influence of social norms on child protection and suggests that it is through this understanding that we can enhance strategies designed to change harmful traditional practices such as CEFM and FGM/C; while identifying practices that promote child well-being including naming ceremonies, the role of local support networks, and allowing for the creation of new options and alternatives to harmful practices.

The findings of this research will be of great value to the Department for International Development (DFID), World Vision and the World Vision partnership and the wider Non-governmental organisation (NGO) community by filling crucial gaps in our understanding of social norms approach and identifying why this approach has been successful, to what extent has it been successful, and to allow World Vision to identify promising practices to address social norms change further in our programming and policy. The findings will also inform an understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation.

## Research Questions

1. In what ways have social norms, pertaining to Harmful Traditional Practice (HTP) changed, in two World Vision target communities?
2. To what extent has this social norms change embedded itself within the community, sufficient to change children's lived experience?
3. How have social norms change impacted children's lived experiences, (including enhancing positive socio-cultural capital supporting child safety and well-being?)
4. What are the key drivers of social norms change in these World Vision communities and how does this align with the ToC?

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the document the terminology of "early marriage" is used to encompass practices of child, early and forced marriage

<sup>2</sup> This research purpose has been developed from previous WVI research "A child protection Theory of Change research study to strengthen formal and non - formal protection systems in four WV East African countries"

<sup>3</sup> CommGAP Social norms and Communication Influence <http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/PDF/Outputs/CommGAP/SocialNormsweb.pdf>

# Scope and Methodology

The research applied used mixed methods research. This emphasised qualitative approaches supplemented by limited quantitative data (e.g. rank ordering of themes from social mapping and focus group discussions).

The emphasis of the methodology lies in approaches and tools that are contextual and participatory. These tools encourage local reflection on attitudes, values and behaviours influencing 'bottom up' approaches to social norms change in relation to World Vision's Child Protection and Advocacy (CPA) programming.

In each research site, the research team worked with WV staff and local stakeholders, including children, adult care providers and members of local child protection committees. A special focus was placed on understanding the influence of empirically defined local reference groups. These included but were not limited to:

- Children's peer networks
- Women's groups
- Traditional and faith leaders
- World Vision staff



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Interviewing woman's group in Uganda © Philip Cook, IICRD



In addition, given the focus on child protection, special emphasis was given to understanding the role and influence of traditional values shaping local beliefs and on well-being. For example, the deeper value of protection associated with girls marrying at a young age. Ethnographic and reflective narrative tools were used to also explore how these values have changed as well as exploring key drivers of changes to social norms affecting child protection and well-being. Traditional values were explored from multiple perspectives including: interviews with elders with traditional social knowledge relevant to early marriage; intergenerational dialogue bringing children and adults together; and key informant interviews with diverse religious leaders (Christian, Hindu, and Muslim).

All data was collected in a sensitive and ethical manner with reference to WV's guidelines for data collection and in addition the researcher(s) worked with local WV staff to ensure that children's participation was safe and age appropriate<sup>4</sup>.

Finally, where possible data was summarised and validated with feedback from local stakeholders to maximise the validity and contextual accuracy of information gathered. This was carried out to provide an opportunity for World Vision staff and community stakeholders, including children, to engage in discussion aimed to apply research findings to strengthen child protection practice.

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<sup>4</sup> WV's Ethical Guidelines for data collection and Guidelines for Children's participation will be provided.



# Research Results

The research results are organised according to the four guiding research questions.

**In what ways have social norms, pertaining to HTP changed, in two WV target countries?**

**Significant changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour, even though social norms were not the original focus of the project.**

Interviews in all communities in both Uganda and Nepal indicate that social change has occurred. Participants discussed a much higher incidence of early marriage prior to the World Vision child protection program. The following quote from a focus group with the child protection committee in Kiboga, Uganda bears witness to this.

“Before World Vision began this work, children were so affected. There were many bad parents who did not watch out for their children, and this led to a lot of early marriage. The people who were perpetrators of early pregnancy and early marriage were not taken to court. No one was doing sensitisation on these issues. But now we have World Vision working and helping us.”

Focus Group Discussion with  
Child Protection Committee  
(CPC), Kiboga ADP

Research with traditional leaders and family members in both Uganda and Nepal indicate the social norm of early marriage has its roots in two sets of beliefs and practices. The first includes cultural beliefs rooted in moral concepts of “honour” (doing the right thing for your child), closely tied to the value of “being a responsible parent”, and in Nepal Hindu religious beliefs of Karma, promoting good fortune or Muslim beliefs on being an honourable, righteous person.



Young mothers group in Uganda discuss how early marriage has changed in their community

The second, related set of beliefs reflected underlying socio-economic factors related to dowry or bride price, which socially united families, strengthening social networks and brought economic advantage to families through exchange of dowry.

Interviews indicate that in the past, it was common practice for arranged marriages in Uganda to be carried out for girls as soon as they reached puberty. In Nepal marriages might be arranged even earlier when the girl was as young as five and carried out when she first menstruated. Research findings indicated these practices were rooted in economic benefits for certain parties (e.g. families receiving a bride price) as well as the benefit of being seen as a good or righteous parent. These beliefs were further reinforced if children were not married at an early age as they were then seen as “old”, “damaged”, or beyond the scope of a suitable age of marriage (traditionally defined as approximately 14-18).

In both countries significant change seemed to have been achieved in the communities engaged in WV child protection programming. In Uganda, the approximate estimate was that CEFM had been reduced by about 60-70% and in Nepal by approximately 70-80%. It was remarkable that in both countries, CEFM was not the initial focus of the child protection intervention but rather was something that emerged from child and adult community consultation, often as a result of the ADAPT (Analysis, Design and Planning Tool)<sup>5</sup> process.

<sup>5</sup> ADAPT is a rapid participatory assessment and planning tools used by WV at the early stage of implementing child protection programmes.

## 2 To what extent has this social norms change embedded itself within the community, sufficient to change children's lived experience?

**Evidence from multiple reference points (protection committees, youth, religious leaders, elders and families) indicate that social norm change has embedded itself within the communities in Uganda and Nepal.**

In the Ugandan Area Development Programmes (ADP's), CPC members in particular spoke of the change in marriage patterns continuing beyond the end of the project. This was reinforced by many participants including young women who had been married at an early age and saw the difference with their younger peers, almost all of whom now were going to school. In Dwanero ADP, Uganda, a notable success, resulting from the work of the child protection committee, was the creation of a local child rights NGO who were actively working to prevent cases of early marriage.

### **Diffusion over Tipping Point**

On the whole, there seemed to be substantial evidence supporting a process of slow diffusion over a sudden tipping point. This was discussed in terms of a slow gradual ownership beginning with local leaders and faith leaders whose opinion and social stature are especially respected. This wasn't a simple process, and was initially met with resistance. The strategy of the faith leader typically involved combining awareness raising training with messages warning of the health risks of early marriage combined with an emphasis on the greater social value in waiting for a girl to marry. The following interview with a Pastor reveals the process of social norm change through gradual diffusion.

“When we first started fighting against early marriage, people criticised us saying we were interfering. (Interviewer): What did you do to change this situation? (Faith leader) Training - we trained many people to be aware of the problem and to become organised in addressing it. Also the setup of the church changed in order to address it. We have a Christian Youth Fellowship, a women's group, a youth group, etc. and all these began thinking how they could help to prevent early marriage. Together, we brought people together in the organisations and told them of the main dangers of early marriage. These included the girl losing her future as her opportunities diminish. Also, she cannot hold the pregnancy, and she dies in birthing but the child cannot be saved. The participants and groups spread the word. Another problem was that girls marry early and contract HIV, so the husband divorces them. We argued that if you let your daughters study they will develop a high value. When the girl completes her education, her value is increased. Also, she will bring a better bride price.”

(Key informant interview, Pastor, Ntwetwe ADP).

### **Strong local ownership**

In both Uganda and Nepal there was considerable evidence for strong local ownership of changed social norms preventing early marriage, especially in regards to strong messages from local traditional and faith leaders, reinforced by the community sensitisation of the child protection committees and peer to peer education lead by youth groups in Uganda the children's clubs in Nepal.

Interviews with traditional leaders underscored that in the context of Christian, Muslim and Hindu beliefs, there was not a precedent for early marriage and that religious values of social harmony, being a good parent, and reinforcement of social bonds could be shifted from the practice of CEFM to contemporary positive norms of education and children's rights.

“There is no place in the Upanishads, Vedas or Bhagavad Ghita, where support for early marriage is discussed. As Brahmins, we can use our sacred texts to promote respect for children and their well-being”. (Key informant interview, Brahmin Priest, Singiya ADP).



Local leaders and faith leaders were essential in the process of diffusion and the change in social norms.

### 3 How have social norms change impacted children's lived experiences, (including enhancing positive socio-cultural capital supporting child safety and well-being?)

While highlighting positive and negative impacts of social norm change on children's lives, one of the most important findings is the key role that children's own agency plays in changing social norms.

#### Positive impact on children's lives

In both countries, River of Life: Most Significant Change research activities indicate there is considerable evidence showing the positive impact of the social norms activities on children's daily lives. Examples include:

- The impact of community sensitisation increasing girls enrolment in education
- Children views now heard and considered by parents and other community members
- Better understanding of vulnerability of certain groups of children and the role root causes such as extreme poverty and social isolation play in early marriage
- Prevention of actual cases of early marriage
- Girls and boys have more positive role models to follow
- By remaining in school boys and girls have increased life skills such as critical thinking skills, agency, and self-empowerment
- Girls reported having more self-confidence and maturity to navigate marriage discussions with boys, within their families and communities when they stay longer in school

One example of a positive role model to prevent girls marrying early in Nepal is Priya Rai, a local teacher in Ranibas ADP.

“I had a happy childhood, when I was small I liked to play and read and I was very active in our local children's club. My mother taught me to read and my father is a teacher who was greatly respected in our community. After leaving school I decided to follow his example and study education in the nearby large town, that was a big step for our family and community as very few girls went to post-secondary education but my mother and father felt it was important. Many of my friends married before they finished school and ended up having children at a young age, though now it's different and fewer girls are marrying and more going to school. Parents now have a new attitude that girls need school and this is a widely held value that even religious leaders are beginning to promote. This has been achieved by agencies like WV and the Government working together with local leaders. (Asked if she believe she is a role model). I do think many younger girls see me as a role model, especially because I come from this community and have the same roots they do. They ask me where I studied, how I became a teacher and what I will do in the future. I still help with the local Children's Club, though I focus most of my attention on my classes as I want to be a good teacher and help children of all ages in our community!” (Key informant interview, Teacher, Ranibas ADP)



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As the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors around early marriage shifted in the communities, more girls and boys had positive role models they could look up to.

## Potential negative impact on children's lives

Unfortunately, there appear to also be some negative impacts of the intervention on children's lived experience. Examples include:

- Girls with more education now have a higher "bride price" and are married more quickly when they graduate than uneducated girls
- Increase in child initiated early marriage<sup>6</sup>

### **This last point on child initiated early marriage and the influence of popular culture and information and communication technologies (ICT), in an important consideration to this report.**

In Uganda and particularly in Nepal, many participants in the research discussed a disturbing trend in which, as adult initiated early marriage declined, there was a parallel increase in child initiated early marriage. Various reasons were provide for this, including: increasing social contact between boys and girls as more children attended school; the prevalence and popularity of romantic narratives in popular culture (e.g. Bollywood movies in Nepal, TV pop music in Uganda); the influence of ICT's such as cell phones and Facebook, which reduce adult impact of children's sexual and social lives; and, children having increased contact in children's clubs with little opportunity to safely explore emotions and romantic feelings .

In many instances, children described vulnerable peers, falling in love, having out of wedlock sex and then eloping or marrying to validate their relationships, even though these relationships were often short lived. These expedited weddings were even given their own youth terminology of "fly marriages" in Uganda and "Bollywood marriages" in Nepal.

The following example of Asmita, a WV sponsored child from Nepal, reveals some of the ways these child initiated early marriages are occurring.

"I was a registered child with WV. I was studying in class 10 and met a boy from elsewhere who was in class 9 (also a WV sponsored child). We fell in love and planned to marry. My parents disapproved but we ran away and the boy pressured me to marry him. Now we live with his family who want him to go away to work. Because I have missed so much school, I was forced to drop out. I have now reconciled with my parents, and my husband and I have decided to wait and have children after he comes back from his work. I deeply regret leaving school and wish I could finish my studies and still see my friends. Many times I am lonely and don't feel ready for these things in my life. I also fear that my husband might take a second wife in the place he goes to work as this is very common and often results in husband's bringing HIV home to their real wives."

(Key informant interview, Married Girl, Chandbela ADP)

Even though these young people know about early marriage campaigns they remain vulnerable to child initiated early marriage. As one young participant sagely stated, "Campaigns can't reach everywhere, they can't reach inside the heart". This is likely because the campaigns focus on moral, law enforcement messages, emphasising the immorality and illegality of older age men marrying young girls, to which young people don't consider themselves included.

The key agentic role of children in social norm change is one of the most important findings from the research and warrants significant future research and programming reflection, especially as WV and DFID programming may be working against preventing early marriage through poorly targeted legalistic approaches to preventing early marriage.

<sup>6</sup> Using the term child initiated early marriage we are discussing cases where, unlikely traditionally held understanding of CEFM, where adults initiate marriages, these are marriages initiated by children themselves, under their own agency for various reasons.

## 4 What are the key drivers of social norms change in these WV communities?

Research and programming needs to consider the importance of cultural and economic contexts. It is important to recognise the relationship between differing cultural root values underlying social norms such as “honour”, “Karma”, kinship ties; and the economic benefits for families.

In reviewing the experience of World Vision child protection interventions in Uganda and Nepal, there appear to be a series of key interconnected common drivers of successful social norm change.

A central part of taking a contextual approach to social norm change is to understand the root values that underpin widely held social beliefs. In both countries, through deep community engagement using participatory tools such as ADAPT, cultural concepts of honour, karma and being a righteous person were found to be key drivers that local leaders could use as a foundation for awareness raising. These values then became a foundation for the next stage work of the protection committees in reporting and referring cases.



Central to the research was the opportunity for data to be summarised and validated with feedback from local stakeholders.

One interesting area of intervention in both countries was understanding and targeting important kinships ties that shape social norms. For example, in Uganda paternal “aunties” have traditionally played a key role in arranging marriages, while in Nepal this role was often played by aunts or uncles on either side of the family who would assist in seeking and organising marriages for children, often with input from local priests.

Finally, a key driver for social norm change has involved addressing the economic role that marriage played for poor families, and providing alternate economic opportunities. This is an area where WV holds a strategic value added, due to its broad based poverty alleviation programs and there was evidence in both countries that communities were willing to engage in social norm change due to assistance with farming practices, school enrolment and vocational training, and micro-credit programs. This was very apparent in Uganda for example, as some of the research interviews overlapped with discussions on WV’s new micro-credit program and interviewees themselves identified the link between the research on preventing early marriage and assistance to families living in poverty.



Dr Philip Cook, key researcher, leads children in Nepal on participatory research tools to understand how they view early marriage.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

This brief summary of the full report includes broad cross-cutting conclusions followed by a more in depth discussion on five thematic areas with recommendation. Key cross cutting conclusions emerging from the research include the following:

## Cross-cutting Conclusions

In both Uganda and Nepal:

1. WorldVision has had significant success in “bottom up” approaches changing social norms fueling HTP (early marriage)
2. Importance of community and faith leaders in this process
3. Role of community child protection mechanisms (CPC's and Village Child Protection and Promotion Committee's is significant in bringing community buy in to change social norms)
4. Child protection social norms such as early marriage are being significantly shaped by broader global and national social norms such as woman's human rights
5. Social norms such as early marriage are being replaced by emergent norms such as the value of education
6. Patterns of marriage are changing as vulnerable young people make their own decisions on marrying as they seek social legitimacy and opportunities to bring meaning to casual relationships

## Thematic Conclusions and Recommendations: Focal implications for policy and programming

The following discussion outlines key areas for practice and policy reflections. It is first important to recognise potential limitations in the research. These include: the relatively short timeframe in which data was gathered (two weeks per site), the primary use of selective qualitative data methods with relatively small sample sizes, and the inability to conduct research in control communities with no WorldVision interventions. While some of these challenges were off set by measures such as reviewing additional monitoring data provided by WV and conducting broader interviews with WV and local and national government partners, the limitations do need to be considered. It is hoped that additional quantitative monitoring and evaluation data gathered by WV will inform and expand the findings from this study.

### I. What Works and Does Not Work

#### What's working

Clearly aspects of the protection programming that WorldVision has been implementing in the communities participating in this social norms research seems to be working. As exemplified in the findings, this results from a social norm change strategy that begins with social opinion leaders (SOL) who can influence underlying cultural values such as honour, before mobilising communities, with community child protection committees at the heart of this process, with a combination of sensitisation and a soft law approach that involves prevention and early intervention strategies such as counseling.

Equally important is an economic strategy that addresses some of the underlying poverty drivers of early marriage. This is an area where WV's broad based approach to poverty alleviation through a variety of ADP micro-economic and educational interventions is making a significant difference.

#### What's not working: Children living in minorities or extreme poverty, child initiated early marriage

The research revealed that certain groups of especially vulnerable children, for example children from certain ethnic minority groups or children living in extreme poverty may still be engaging in early marriage. In addition, the growing concern with child initiated early marriage is an area where WV's interventions do not seem to be making a significant difference. In fact early evidence gathered in this study indicates that campaigns that use law enforcement messages targeting adult initiated early marriage may be having a negative effect whereby children elope to get marry, keep their relationships hidden using ICT, or simply ignore punitive messages due to the strength of emerging “romantic love” social norms pervasive among adolescents in many countries.



### Recommendations

- Further refine WV's emerging strategy to increase resources to understanding and supporting most vulnerable children (MVC)
- Adapt the MVC strategies based on contextual understanding of MVC, for example, include this as part of ADAPT early program assessment, and involved children and social opinion leaders meaningfully in this process
- Continue to work with Faith and traditional leaders as the gateway to social norm change
- Strengthen capacity of community child protection committees as a bridge between initial work with SOL's and the broader community
- Develop separate and targeted programs for child initiated early marriage

## 2. New Social Norms

One of the most important findings in the research is the emergence of new social norms emphasising the importance of education and promotion of women and children's rights. Both of these new protective social norms are becoming key drivers of harmful social norm change reducing the incidence of adult initiated early marriage. This has important strategic implications for WV to continue to strengthen partnerships between child protection and government and civil society education agencies, as well as those sectors involved in promoting children's rights such as law enforcement, justice and social empowering ministries for women and youth.

### Recommendations

- Broaden child protection strategies to include greater partnership with education, law enforcement, justice and socially empowering ministries
- Conduct further research to better understand potential links between social norm work targeting adults and rise in child initiated early marriage
- At the local level, expand the relationship between child protection committees and buffering children's vulnerability to early marriage
- Target children who are at risk of dropping out of school for extra support
- Promote curriculum enhancing children's life skills, such as World Vision's Peace Road Curriculum, to be delivered by teachers and other key social opinion leaders identified by children, especially MVC.



Young boys in Uganda spoke of their own attitudes towards early marriage in their community.



Children's peer networks, including girls and boys, provided valuable insight into their lived experiences of early marriage, and how changes impacted their lives.

### 3. Children's Agency

An important finding in the research is the importance of children as key "influencers" of social norms. This is a significant contribution to both the academic and grey literature as well as the global development discourse. As young people increasingly make up a disproportionate sector of the global human family, and as they increase their social influence through social networks and other information and communication technologies, their influence will continue to grow, both for adult initiated early marriage and child initiated early marriage. This may be of even greater importance in urban centers where youth are more widely represented, but should not be overlooked in rural communities, such as those engaging in WV's child protection programs, where child and youth engagement also had a major impact.

World Vision's ability to keep pace with children's agency is especially important given this changing nature of early marriage uncovered in both countries. While WV is actively engaged in children's lives through sponsorship, children's clubs, child parliaments, youth faith groups and other activities, it appears from the research findings, that the CEFM strategies have not kept pace with the changing social norm toward child initiated early marriage.

The increase in child initiated early marriage has especially important implications for understanding and responding to the complex human ecology of this emergent social norm. For example, given the emphasis on "romantic love" and increasing relations between boys and girls, faith and traditional leaders will likely have less influence, as key peers and adults with appropriate information like teachers and NGO's will have more influence. National youth celebrities could become important social opinion leaders to spread messages that will create lasting social norm change with children and youth. Similarly, current communication strategies for awareness raising using religious sermons, community meetings and radio messages, will likely have to be altered to incorporate information and communication technologies such as radio, internet, cell phones Facebook, twitter, and SMS text messages. Given the importance of peer leaders, key mentors, and teachers, as important reference groups, strategies should be designed to work through these reference groups.

Finally, children's clubs and other child and youth groups (e.g. sports clubs, the Scouts, Faith youth groups, children's parliaments) will become even more important as reference groups in this process. Communication messaging will also have to develop a new narrative to keep pace with these changes. In contrast to a morality, legalistic narrative, messages will have to focus on opportunities for boys and girls to develop healthy, meaningful relationships with each other and becoming "modern" in a healthy way supportive of human rights and human development. This does not mean moralistic, legalistic, and economic values will become non-influential, as young people interviewed in this research clearly found both drivers important, when combined with child and youth oriented messages.

#### Recommendations

- Recognise the importance of children's agency in early marriage social norm change
- Develop new strategies with appropriate social influence leaders, reference groups and communication strategies
- Engage children and adults in intergenerational dialogue on social norm change to overcome lack of understanding between generations on key blocks and opportunities to social norm change
- Build on the success of community children's clubs and child parliaments to introduce curriculum on meaningful relationships between the sexes.

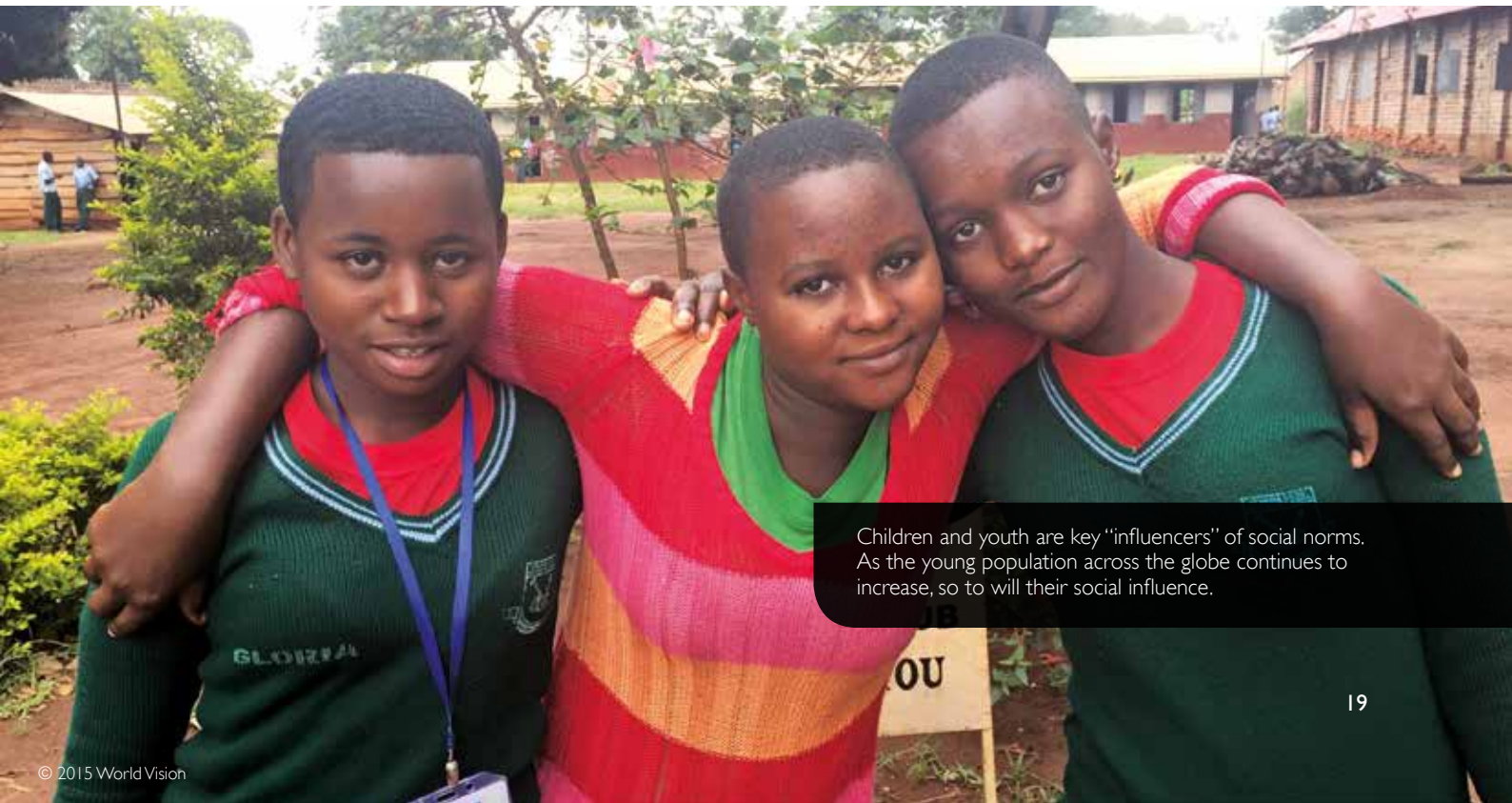
## 4. Current Thinking on Social Norms: Multi-systemic approaches and implications for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs offer a real opportunity to prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable children in our programming, ensuring that no one is left behind. This research suggests that to prioritise the world's most vulnerable and disadvantaged, and to truly reach the SDGs, we need to consider how to make best use of our community based approach. This approach is in line with DFID's promise to leave no one behind and ensures that people who are furthest behind, who have least opportunity and who are the most excluded are prioritised by their communities.

There are a number of implications from this research that should help inform current thinking on social norm change, especially at it pertains to "bottom up" community based child protection systems strengthening. Firstly, the experience from the research in the communities in both Nepal and Uganda provides compelling evidence that social norm change with regards to reducing early marriage of girls can be achieved, in a relatively short time frame (3-5 years) with considerable success. While the limitations in the data need to be considered, nevertheless, in both countries this seemed to lead to quite a large drop in the rate of early marriage (60-80%). This reduction is quite dramatic and, in reflecting on the literature on social norms, underscores the success of WV's child protection programs in implementing a multi-systemic approach to social norm change.

Key considerations in this multi-systemic process of change include;

- In both cases social norm change, arose from local strategic community decision making set in the broader context of child protection interventions, in which tools like WV's ADAPT played a key role in creating an early foundation for positioning social norm change in broader social readiness for child protection.
- Although the role of culture does not figure predominately in the literature, the role of cultural norms such as "honour", "being a righteous person", and "karma" and "kismet", played a significant role in shaping social norms and understanding these values, allows for a more targeted strategy in deciding on entry points to social norm change.
- In light of the underlying norms, the role of Faith and community leaders became central, but especially when supported by local CP mechanisms at the community/village level. This was further enhanced when these messages were promoted by women's groups targeting key CEFM actors such as paternal aunties.
- Early marriage as a specific social norm has a number of characteristics that may respond well to these interventions, which may not apply other harmful traditional practices. First early marriage is a relatively "open" practice, compared with more "hidden" practices such as domestic violence or FGM/C. This makes assessing early marriage easier and when communities become galvanised, monitoring and eradicating early marriage may be more likely. In particular when combined with ICT tools such as cell phones, establishing surveillance systems to monitor and intervene in cases of early marriage become more feasible. This was the case in both countries where CP committee members, police and other partners, including children, scaled up intervention efforts to cover greater geographic scale.



Children and youth are key "influencers" of social norms. As the young population across the globe continues to increase, so to will their social influence.

# Appendix I: Implications for SDGs

Programming and advocacy initiatives for children rooted in the SDGs, as the predominant global framework for human rights, security and poverty alleviation, should be considered in light of these findings. Implications for specific SDG targets emerging from these findings include:

**Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.** In light of the reference to preventing early marriage in SDG Target 5.3 (eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation), the research findings point to potential means of “bottom up” community child protection interventions that could significantly impact these harmful social norms. Key strategies should include working with locally identified social opinion leaders, before leveraging child protection mechanisms such as child protection committees, and meaningfully engaging children in social norm programming, policy and advocacy initiatives.

**Goal 4: Inclusive and equitable education.** Education is an emergent social norm that can reduce the harmful norm of early marriage. This is especially important for especially vulnerable children such as girls growing up in very poor families and children from socially marginalised groups for whom inclusive and equitable schools may not be available.

**Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and between countries.** Inequality as a driver of vulnerability was found to create a greater likelihood for girls engaging in early marriage. This pertained to both adult initiated early marriage and child initiated early marriage. Poverty alleviation as a means of reducing inequality helps provide greater access to schools and promotes child rights and specific CRC articles of non-discrimination (article 2), protection from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation (article 19), access to quality education promoting full and health development (article 28, 29) and empowerment of boys and girls (article 12, 13).

**Goal 16: Peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and accountable government institutions.** Creating an enabling environment that addresses all forms of violence against children is critical to reducing the social norm of early marriage. This matters as early marriage is both a form of violence against children and is more prevalent in societies in which girls and women are disempowered and subject to harmful violent practices. As seen in the research in Uganda and Nepal, justice and the role of law enforcement can either hinder community lead efforts to reduce early marriage when law enforcement officers are corrupt, or these officers can become important allies in reducing early marriage and intervening in ways that create effective early intervention measure to annul these marriages. When law enforcement agencies have specialised training, such is the case with women and children’s police units in Nepal, they can effectively counsel girls and boys resulting in better rehabilitation and reintegration of early marriage cases.

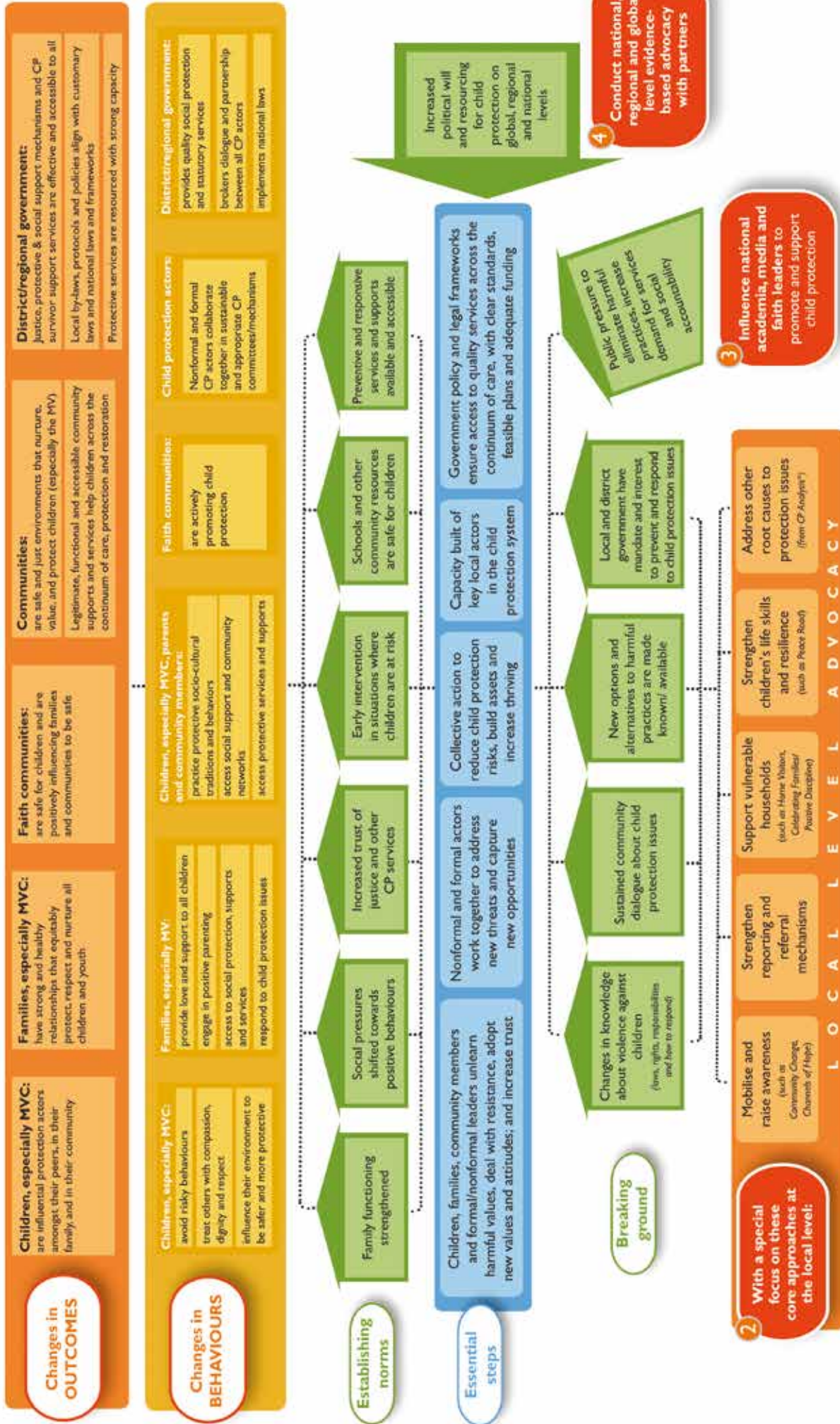
## Recommendations

- Start where communities find themselves
- Address deeper cultural norms, values and practices
- Recognise the importance of Faith and community leaders as social opinion leaders working with local CP mechanisms
- Unique characteristics of early marriage respond well to these interventions
- Emphasise the importance of awareness raising and advocacy on the SDG’s, both at national and local government levels, including awareness raising strategies among local communities and their leaders
- Adapt WV CPToC to the SDGs with special reference to targets 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 10 (reduced inequalities), and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions)

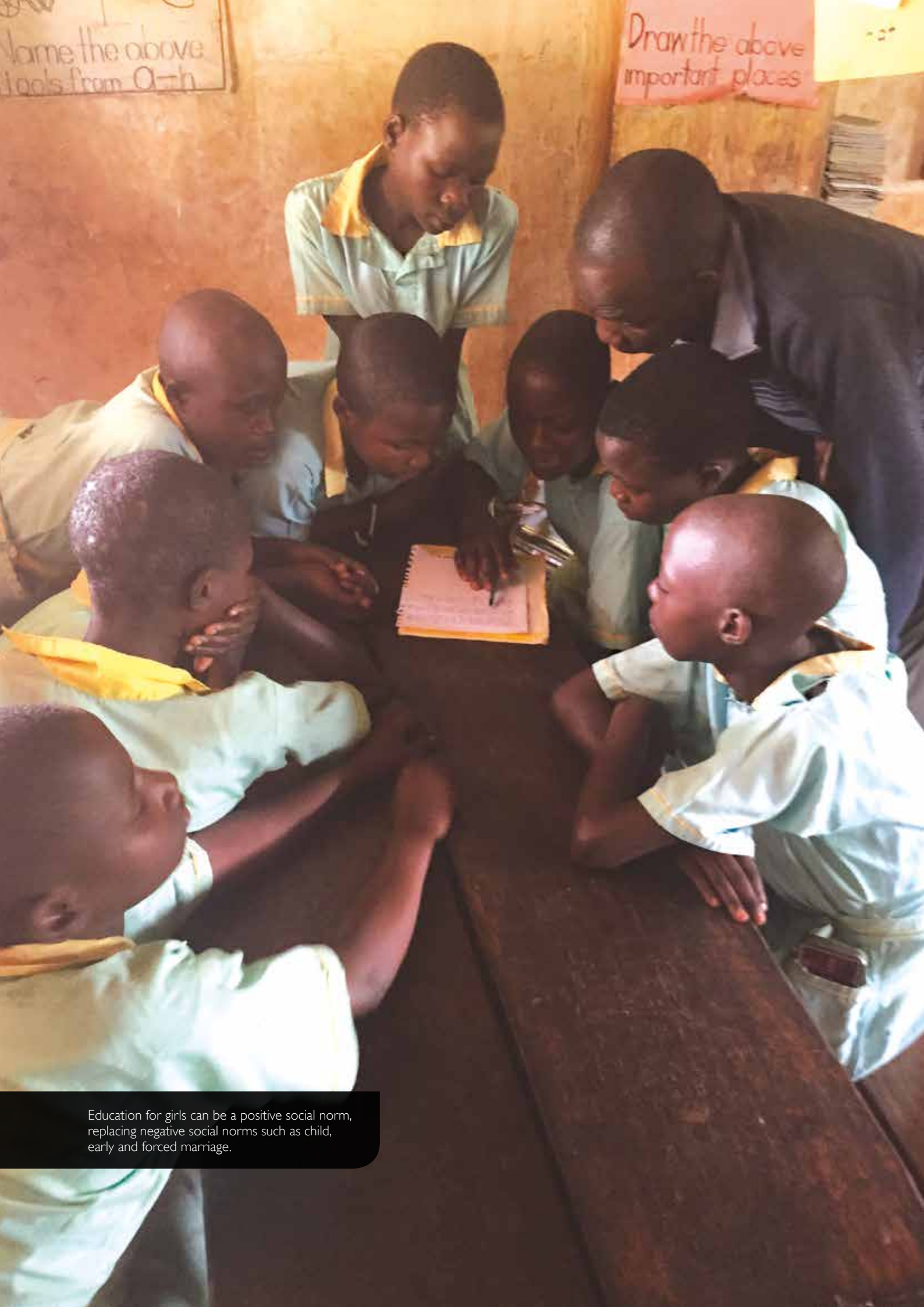
The full report can be found at [www.worldvision.org.uk](http://www.worldvision.org.uk)

# WVI Child Protection Theory of Change

As of 03-07-2014



\* For example, access to clean water near home, inclusive education, livelihoods, social protections to address extreme poverty and food insecurity, or safe spaces to play.



Education for girls can be a positive social norm, replacing negative social norms such as child, early and forced marriage.



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