

ACT WITH HER: Forging Panoramic Pathways with Girls from Adolescence to Adulthood

What Applying a Gender Lens to Our Data Taught Us



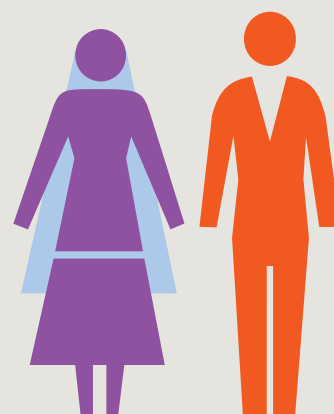
Act With Her is a five-year program in Ethiopia that partners with girls to forge the health, education, economic, and social pathways they need to thrive during the transition to adulthood. We engage girls, boys, and their parents or caregivers in group sessions over 10 months, and in some areas also work over a longer period to catalyze shifts in social and gender norms and in the adolescent-friendliness of key systems and services.

Designed to separately serve very young adolescents (VYAs) and older adolescents, with a learning period built in between, we engaged the first cohort of VYAs from March 2019 through January 2020, with over 13,000 girls and boys participating in over 500 groups. Through a retrospective, intersectional gender analysis of program monitoring data (which included qualitative feedback from participants), **WE LEARNED:**



Gender norms directly affected participation

Many adolescents said that gendered roles prevented regular group attendance. Girls cited domestic responsibilities and boys described economic activities outside the home such as animal herding. Partial participation may diminish potential impact, so adolescents may need support in navigating gendered constraints.



An intersectional lens could unlock success for equity and inclusion

Besides gender, other factors like age, school status, and marital status can influence an adolescent's level of participation and the benefits they reap. For example, our data showed that married girls missed more sessions than unmarried girls and therefore may need targeted support to attend.

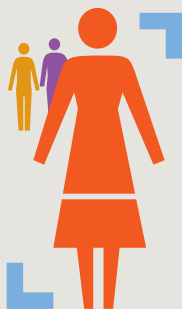
Discussing gender norms with parents and caregivers is key

Gender norms are discussed early on in the series of group sessions held for parents and caregivers. This may help improve equitable participation and subsequent benefits. Some adolescents said that their parents started compromising with them on chores, and some caregivers who joined the gender norms discussions reported encouraging their daughters to regularly attend.



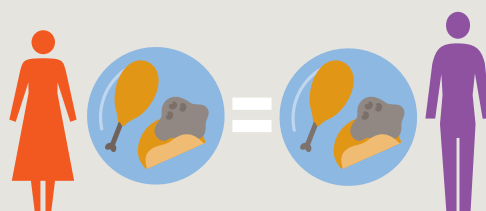
Complex gender topics need gender-balanced framing

For example, encouraging women and girls to stop the practice of female genital cutting (FGC) should be accompanied by discussions with men and boys aimed at increasing the acceptability of marrying women who have not undergone FGC. Such gender synchronized framing underscores that addressing girls' and women's issues is everyone's responsibility.



Gender norms and traditional roles might shift for individuals in a short time

Adolescents, mentors, and caregivers all reported changes in their experiences with gendered divisions of labor and shifts in gendered attitudes. Boys described doing a larger share of household chores, and after the program, group mentors were less likely to report agreeing that limited food should be given to boys and men first.



Act With Her is led by Pathfinder International, in collaboration with the Government of Ethiopia, in partnership with CARE International, and with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Evidence of impact is being assessed by the UK Department for International Development (DFID)-funded Gender & Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) research consortium.

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