

SOS Children's Village in Ethiopia Jimma Programme Location

Report on

**Gap analysis on the knowledge, attitudes, and
practices (KAP) of religious, cultural, and opinion
leaders around social and gender norms for Grow
Equal Project in Mendera Kochi and Jiren Kebeles of
Jimma Town**

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Executive summary

Background and objectives: Social norms are rules that define acceptable and appropriate actions members of a society adhere to; they guide human behaviours. And, gender norms are generally accepted social rules that command characteristics, roles and practices of women, girls, men, and boys in a society. Gender norms are profoundly implanted in social structures, but still can change over time. They manifest within households, families, neighbourhoods and communities. Gender norms warrant the preservation of social order, sanctioning deviance from the norms. Norms are preserved by social traditions (that control and pressurize behaviours of women, girls, men and boys) and by social institutions (that maintain gender inequities). Further, gender norms shape the roles of each gender (gender roles). Gendered power inequalities are sustained by social and gender norms. So, analysis of these power inequalities is essential for comprehending situations in our communities so as to challenge discriminatory norms and gender inequalities through context-based effective intervention strategies. Currently, SOS Children's Village Ethiopia, Jimma Programme is at an initial stage of implementing Grow Equal Project with the main goal of contributing to building resilient communities that promote equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources for women, girls and persons with disabilities regarding green economic opportunities and social protection in Mendera Kochi and Jiren Kebeles of Jimma Town. To come up with baseline findings for Grow Equal Project (an intervention that tries to augment knowledge, influence attitudes, and change practices), a gap analysis on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of religious, cultural and opinion leaders, and others around social and gender norms have to be conducted. Accordingly, the objectives of the gap analysis were to identify gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of religious, cultural and opinion leaders, and others around social and gender norms; to examine adverse effects of gaps in KAP around social and gender norms on children, adolescent girls and boys, women, men, persons with disability and community; to indicate gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and effective intervention strategies to curtail negative outcomes and to ensure gender equality; and to forward practical recommendations on the strategies to strengthen the capacities of religious, cultural and opinion leaders and others around social and gender norms.

Methodology: An exploratory qualitative approach was used for this gap analysis, mainly because the plan was to explore opinion, knowledge, attitude, belief and behaviour related to harmful cultural, religious, social and gender norms of specific participant groups. The gap analysis depended on primary data collected using qualitative methods — i.e. focus group discussion (FGD), key informant interview (KII) and direct observation. Further, secondary sources were referred to during the review of related literature. Participants of this assessment were representative of religious, cultural and opinion leaders from the two kebeles of Jimma Town. Moreover, key stakeholders such as girls, boys, community-based organization (CBO) like the “idir” — i.e., self-help associations that operate at the local level and offer mutual socio-economic support to their members, Savings and Credit Co-operative (SACCO), women leaders, people with disability and key staff within local government authorities (i.e., gender focal person and social affairs focal person) were part of this gap analysis.

In general, thirteen (13) key informant interviews were conducted with religious leaders, cultural leaders, opinion leaders, women leaders, woman with disability, gender focal person, social affairs focal person, representatives of CBO and SACCO. Focus group discussions with boys (six in number), with girls (eight in number) and with persons with disabilities (seven in number) were also conducted. Moreover, critical observations regarding the topic under investigation were made and comprehensive notes were taken in the two Kebeles. The interview and focus group discussion (FGD) guides were prepared in English. The interviews and FGDs were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and those collected in Afan Oromo and Amharic were translated into English. Field notes were taken during and after the interviews, discussions and observations. The qualitative data were coded, recoded, and then categorized to form major and sub-themes. Hence, thematic analysis supplemented by content analysis for the secondary materials were employed. Themes were presented based on components of the gap analysis objectives. Thematic analysis allows the researcher to identify and make sense of recurring experiences and patterns of meanings. Further, findings were presented along with selected quotations of the study participants’ responses, their descriptions and explanations for their meanings.

Findings and recommendations: The findings revealed that there are still areas of improvement concerning gender knowledge, particularly for the less educated members of the communities. Gaps in gender attitudes and practices are even more pronounced — i.e., our communities lack mindset and beliefs, and do not practice what they preach about positive social and gender norms. The communities stick to

discriminatory and entrenched social and gender norms, which favor men and boys almost in all aspects of life. For example, household activities, childcare and other low-paying occupations are left for women and girls. Particularly, the gaps in attitudes, beliefs and practices around social and gender norms are rooted in engrained poverty, established traditional norms, cultural practices, lack of education, wrong interpretations of religious texts, religious beliefs, teachings and practices. Furthermore, the communities' lack of knowledge, unfavorable attitudes and practices about women, girls and persons with disabilities have had adverse economic, social, political, health, well-being, mental health, psychological and life-threatening (risk of death) effects on them (and even beyond). More importantly, comprehensive, gender-sensitive, disability-inclusive and effective intervention strategies can miniaturize traditional and discriminatory gender roles, and ensure gender equality. The intervention needs to encompass addressing gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices particularly in gender and disability issues. It ought to focus on empowering, predominantly, women, girls and people with disabilities. Consequently, the intervention will be able to support in ensuring social inclusion of these groups, building resilient communities, and making institutions accountable to these people they serve.

1. Introduction

Sex refers to “the different biological and physiological characteristics of males and females, such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones, etc.”; whereas, gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviors and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. According to WHO, while most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviors – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and work places. When individuals or groups do not “fit” established gender norms they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion. Traditionally, girls and women are seen as polite, accommodating, caregivers, nurturers, homemakers, helpers and are generally expected to dress in typically feminine ways. Men's gender roles include breadwinner, leader, and protector and revolve around characteristics such as are aggressive, bold, dominance, assertiveness, and strength. Gender-based roles and other attributes can change over time and vary with different cultural contexts¹.

Further, gender issues include all aspects and concerns related to women's and men's lives and situation in society, to the way they interrelate, their differences in access to and use of resources, their activities, and how they react to changes, interventions and policies². Understanding these gender relations and the power dynamics behind them is a prerequisite for understanding individuals' access to and distribution of resources, the ability to make decisions and the way women and men, boys and girls are affected by political processes and social development. Thus, gender is of key importance in defining the power, privilege and possibilities that some people have and some people do not have in a given society. It affects progress towards equality and freedom from discrimination³. Moreover, gender influences human options, conditions, and experiences. Legal, political, economic, cultural and kinship systems are all profoundly gendered. Deep understanding of gender patterns, dynamics and biases can enhance the accuracy and scope of work in many fields. Gender awareness benefits individuals, communities and organizations⁴.

¹ World Health Organization - WHO (2024). Gender and Health

² European Institute for Gender Equality – EIGE (2014). Effectiveness of Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Gender Equality: Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States.

³ Council of Europe – Gender Matters (2024). Exploring gender and gender identity

⁴ University of Northern Colorado (2023). Gender Studies, Engendering Social Change

Addressing gender issues such as violence against women and girls requires a multi-sectoral approach, including the involvement of faith-based and traditional actors. For effective engagement of these actors, understanding how their systems work in practice as well as their core values is of paramount importance⁵. That is, working with key influencers such as religious and traditional leaders and institutions is critical to achieving changes in attitudes towards gender equality and women's empowerment. These can happen by improving the lives of adolescent girls and women by strengthening the enabling environment to overcome gender inequality. For example, faith-based organizations are considered to have more legitimacy, respect and influence than secular government and non-governmental organizations. They tend to be more established and have closer links with communities and are not greeted with suspicion when looking to influence values and social rules through religious and educational activities. They have access to extensive networks and communications channels, and thus play an important role in disseminating messages; shaping public opinion; mobilizing volunteers, financial and advocacy support; and influencing government policy. They are grounded in philosophical and theological frameworks, which allows them to focus their discourse on issues within spiritual commitments to peace, justice and social equality. They are considered to embody moral values, which enables them to influence personal and family domains and attitudes and behaviors. Both Islam and Christianity, for example, emphasize the importance of social justice, and society's responsibility towards the poorest and most vulnerable groups⁶.

However, religious beliefs, teachings, and practices have a profound influence on societal expectations, reinforcing traditional gender roles and contributing to the perpetuation of gender inequalities⁷. In addition, gender inequality is a more pronounced phenomenon in developing countries, which may be rooted in poor governance, and inadequate social and religious institutions⁸. Example, particularly many girls from the poorest families, still face gender discrimination in education, child marriage and pregnancy, sexual violence and unrecognized domestic work⁹. In

⁵ Le Roux, E. and Palm, S. (2021). Learning from Practice: Engaging Faith-based and Traditional Actors in Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls (New York, United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women).

⁶ Ukaid – Voice4Change (2017). Engaging Religious and Traditional Leaders for Gender Equality.

⁷ Huberman, P. O. (2023). The Role of Religion in Shaping Gender Norms and Attitudes: A Case Study of Tanzania. International Journal of Culture and Religious Studies,4.

⁸ Iqbal et al. (2022) Gender equality, education, economic growth and religious tensions nexus in developing countries: A spatial analysis approach. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e11394>

⁹ Save the Children (2024): Gender Discrimination Causes Inequality Between Girls and Boys Around the World

Ethiopia, gender inequality is prevalent in all sectors such in health, education, social and economic¹⁰. More specifically, women in Ethiopia are less likely than men to work at all, and when they do work, they tend to work fewer hours per week. They are also less likely than men to work in the wage sector. Tackling gender norms and institutional constraints that limit women's economic empowerment can help ensure gender equity and equality¹¹.

According to the Charter of the United Nations (ratified as of September 2021), the goal of equality between men and women is an obligation for all UN Member States, including Ethiopia. Similarly, Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5) of UN, planned to be achieved in 2030, promotes gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. Gender equality is where society values the similarities, differences, and roles that men and women play equally. It means that 'men and women should have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development. Gender equality is therefore the equal valuing by society of the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in their home, their community and their society. SDG 5¹² (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) has six targets:

- **Target 5.1** End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- **Target 5.2** Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- **Target 5.3** Eliminate all harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- **Target 5.4** Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
- **Target 5.5** Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

¹⁰ MOWCY, UNICEF Ethiopia and SPRI (2019): Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Child Wellbeing in Ethiopia.

¹¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/africa-gender-innovation-lab>

¹² Advocates for International Development - A4ID (2022). SDG5: GENDER EQUALITY. <http://www.a4id.org/>

- **Target 5.6** Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

In congruent with the UN's SDG5, SOS Children's Village Ethiopia, Jimma Programme is presently at a preliminary stage of implementing Grow Equal Project with the main goal of contributing to building communities that promote equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources for women and girls in all their diversity regarding green economic opportunities and social protection. More specifically, the project intends to bring gender equality, inclusion of persons with disability and environmental protection in two Kebeles (Mendera Kochi and Jiren) of Jimma Town. In addition, it works to ensure family self-reliance considering gender, inclusion, social protection and environmental protection. The project is designed to be implemented for four years (From January 2024 to December 2027). As a baseline study for the new community-based intervention (Grow Equal Project), a gap analysis on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of religious, cultural, and opinion leaders around social and gender norms needs to be carried out. Thus, as a seasoned consultant in this area, I have been given a chance to accomplish the task based on the TOR and within the interest of SOS CV Jimma program Location.

The gap analysis study scrutinized and understood critical gaps with regards to the knowledge attitudes and practices of religious, cultural, and opinion leaders around social and gender norms and how they have affected the lives of women, men, girls, boys and persons with disabilities in all their diversity; inform possible interventions for children, girls, boys, women and peoples with disabilities; and draw feasible recommendations to enhance capacities of religious, cultural, and opinion leaders around social and gender norms, and change harmful social and gender norms that may result in gender inequalities, gender-based violence or discrimination against persons with disabilities.

2. Objectives

The general objective of the consultancy was to conduct a gap analysis on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of religious, cultural, and opinion leaders around social and gender norms and come up with gender-responsive and effective intervention strategies.

Specific objectives

Specifically, the gap analysis was to:

- identify gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of religious, cultural and opinion leaders, and others around social and gender norms.
- examine adverse effects of gaps in KAP around social and gender norms on children, adolescent girls and boys, women, men, persons with disability and community
- indicate gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and effective intervention strategies to curtail negative outcomes and to ensure gender equality.
- forward practical recommendations on the strategies to strengthen the capacities of religious, cultural and opinion leaders and others around social and gender norms

3. Methodology

An exploratory qualitative approach was used for this gap analysis, mainly because the plan was to explore opinion, knowledge, attitude, belief and behaviour related to harmful cultural, religious, social and gender norms of specific participant groups. The gap analysis depended on primary data collected using qualitative methods — i.e. focus group discussion (FGD), key informant interview (KII) and direct observation. Further, secondary sources were referred to during the review of related literature.

Participants of this assessment were representative of religious, cultural and opinion leaders from the two kebeles of Jimma Town. Moreover, key stakeholders such as girls, boys, community-based organization (CBO) like the “idir”— i.e., self-help associations that operate at the local level and offer mutual socio-economic support to their members, Savings and Credit Co-operative (SACCO), women leaders, people with disability and key staff within local government authorities (i.e., gender focal person and social affairs focal person) were part of this gap analysis.

The interview and FGD guides included the following major questions:

- What are the existing knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices of religious, cultural, and opinion leaders around social and gender norms in the two kebeles of Jimma Town?
- What are the gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices of religious, cultural, and opinion leaders around social and gender norms in the target Kebeles?
- What are the adverse effects of these gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices of religious, cultural, and opinion leaders around social and gender norms on the children, adolescent girls, women, men and people with disability in the two kebeles?
- What possible intervention mechanisms can be indicated?
- What recommendations can be drawn from the findings of the gap analysis

In general, twelve (12) key informant interviews were conducted with religious leaders, cultural leaders, opinion leaders, women leaders, woman with disability, gender focal person, social affairs focal person, representatives of CBO and SACCO. Profiles of the key informants are given in the Table 1 below:

Table 1 Key informants' few variables

S. No	KI's Code	Sex	Responsibility	Experience (in years)	Educational Level
1	GFP-001	F	Gender focal person	16	Diploma
2	CR-02	M	Aba Gada (Cultural leader)	Above 30	8 th Grade
3	CR-01	M	Cultural leader	4	12 th Grade
4	CBO-001	M	CBO ('Idir') leader	27	10 ⁺²
5	OL-001	M	Opinion leader	Above 30	6 th
6	RL-03	M	Religious Leader	13	7 th
7	HW-001	F	House wife	6	10 ⁺²
8	RL-01	M	Religious leader	4	Masters' Degree
9	SA-001	F	Social affairs	1	Level IV
10	WWD-001	F	Advocate for Disabilities	4	10 th
11	SACCO-001	M	SACCO Manager	4	Diploma
12	RL-02	M	Religious leader	13	1 st Degree

Focus group discussions with boys (six in number), with girls (eight in number) and with persons with disabilities (seven in number) were also conducted. Few variables of the focus group discussion participants are presented in Table 2 beneath:

Table 2 Focus group discussion participants' few variables

	Boys FGD Participants		Girls FGD Participants		Persons with Disabilities FGD Participants	
S. No	Age	Educational level	Age	Educational level	Age	Educational level
1	20	10th	17	7 th	29	1 st degree
2	16	9th	19	10 th	30	1 st degree
3	18	12th	16	9 th	26	12 th complete
4	20	7th	17	8 th	32	10 th complete
5	24	3rd year BSc student	18	Level II (TVET)	32	Diploma
6	18	8th	19	9 th	15	5 th Grade
7			18	8 th	38	10 th complete
8			20	10 th complete		1 st degree

Moreover, critical observations regarding the topic under investigation were made and comprehensive notes were taken in the two Kebeles.

The interview and focus group discussion (FGD) guides were prepared in English. The interviews and FGDs were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim and those collected in Afan Oromo and Amharic were translated into English. Field notes were taken during and after the interviews, discussions and observations. The qualitative data were coded, recoded, and then categorized to form major and sub-themes. Noticeably, qualitative data require qualitative analysis. Thus, thematic analysis supplemented by content analysis for the secondary materials were employed. Themes were presented based on components of the gap analysis objectives. Thematic analysis is “a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning

(themes) across a dataset”¹³; so, it allows the researcher to identify and make sense of recurring experiences and patterns of meanings¹⁴. Further, findings were presented along with selected quotations of the study participants’ responses, their descriptions and explanations for their meanings.

Ethical considerations: The following ethical considerations will be taken into account:

- SOS Children’s Villages’ Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy and associated processes will be followed during the gap analysis processes.
- Informed consent will be sought from all participants.
- When analysing and presenting data, all identifiers will be removed, and findings will not be attributed to specific participants.
- Possible methodological limitations will be documented in the gap analysis report for consideration in interpreting findings and recommendations.

¹³ Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2012) Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology*, Vol. 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, biological (pp. 57-71). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

¹⁴ Dawadi, S. (2020). Thematic analysis approach: A step-by-step guide for ELT research practitioners. *Journal of NELTA*, 1(2):62-71.

4. Findings

This section covers the gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of religious, cultural and opinion leaders, women and girls, men and boys, and persons with disabilities around social and gender norms. More specifically, the section conveys responses to vital questions such as what does the existing division of tasks, responsibilities and resources among men and women look like in the two Kebeles of Jimma Town —i.e., what are the relative position of men and women in society and the distribution of resources, opportunities, hindrances and decision-making power in these Kebeles? How are activities, access to resources and control patterns structured by the socioeconomic context, and cultural and religious characteristics? Answering these important concerns helps to design gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and context-relevant intervention that can address gender inequalities and meet up with the diverse needs of women, girls, men, boys and individuals with various disabilities.

4.1. Knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) of the participants around social and gender norms

Knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of the participants around social and gender norms

There are still areas of improvement in the community regarding gender knowledge. Gaps in attitudes and behavior (practices) are even bigger. A key informant from 'Abdii Borii' microfinance institution presented his observation as follows:

Our community's perceptions of gender roles still need improvement. The traditional trends from our ancestors have not changed in most parts of our community, for both men and women. The cultural practices and norms around family role assignment between males and females need to be addressed and solved. These ingrained societal expectations often reinforce outdated gender stereotypes and hinder progress towards gender equality.

A religious leader (RL-02) boldly stated that knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding social and gender norms, in our community, are low. He further explained his thoughts beneath:

The attitudes and knowledge of our community regarding the growth and development of females were low. They did not provide equal opportunities for females and males. There was a significant knowledge gap in child development and equality between boys and girls. Regarding resource inheritance, our people typically give inheritance only to males, and this problem persists. When we observe the childcare and household responsibilities, everything is delegated to

women, while the husband is free to come and go as he pleases. Mothers often take the responsibility of feeding their children, even by begging others. Issues related to childbirth and fathers' detachment from the family are prevalent in our city. Our community practices in providing educational opportunities for girls were also low. They assumed that females were born to serve at a household level. The practices of mothers and fathers when buying clothes are not similar, with fathers typically buying clothes only for boys. Our forefathers assumed, and said that females were for 'the others'; and sending them to schools was a waste of time and resources. This type of perception reflects backwardness. When we observe the trend of educating girls in our area, it has declined. Females always take part in breaking stones (as daily laborers) and serving their families at the household level. Our community's economic status may be low or poor, but nothing will prevent them from sending their children to free government schools if their attitudes change. In our kebele and the entire Jimma zone, the opportunities for females have been limited, and even now, the gap is increasing. Concerning people with disabilities, our community has negative attitudes and often views them as useless or discarded objects.

Focus group discussion with individuals with disabilities seriously noted that there are serious problems with job opportunities and work for persons with disabilities. FGD-Dis-03 described the situations as follows:

Job opportunities for people with disabilities are limited. For instance, a group with disabilities once had a chance to form a working group but failed to meet expectations. Consequently, employers and other workers assume that all individuals with disabilities cannot perform adequately, leading to a lack of further opportunities. In contrast, other ('normal') groups receive multiple chances to succeed after failures.

A woman key informant with disability shared similar experience:

In Jimma Town, construction project is underway, and a male individual with a disability who has expertise and rich experience in construction requested a responsible person to participate. However, he was denied the opportunity saying that they would not take the risk if he got injured. Ultimately, he had to return home, feeling morally disturbed and frustrated.

A woman key informant with disability said that there has been partial treatment of persons with disability particularly when it comes to happily accepting them (by families) and providing job opportunity — i.e., less care and support for people with disabilities:

People are not providing adequate care and support for individuals with disabilities who require special assistance. For instance, families with children with disabilities hide their children at home perceiving the situation as a source of shame; but there should be no shame in having a disability, as there are many other problems people face that are more concerning and serious.

Contrary to the above-mentioned idea, a community-based organization (CBO) or 'Idir' leader reflected an optimistic point of view; "children can be born with full physical abilities ('normal'), but they may face disability any time in life. I and our community have to provide care, love, and opportunities to people with disabilities."

The women key informant with disability added that household activities and support for children are left for girls and women. She described her observation as follows:

Women in our community work and perform various tasks to support their families, but the men do not participate in these activities. The majority of the community members were not engaging their male children in household and family support activities as well. Most of the men spend their time in different addiction-related places (at khat chewing places). Similarly, most of our community members provide services and support more for males, than for females. Sometimes, fathers purchase educational materials (e.g., exercise books) for their sons and tell their daughters to ask their mothers to buy them the educational materials; this differential treatment is unacceptable.

A key informant who is a social affairs representative shared her points fully aligned with the above, and added that there is really big gap in practices in the community; "Our community is not practicing what they preached about women, household roles and positions."

Though there is improvement in awareness about gender roles, there are still huge gaps in attitudes and behaviors in our community. A religious leader (RL-01) shared his concerns in this regard as presented below:

The awareness of our community [on gender issues] is not as it was previously; there is a change, but not enough yet. When children return from school, families tend to assign traditional female roles to girls while allowing boys freedom to study or play outside by taking a ball to play; even educated families practice this. Boys are often allowed to do their homework immediately after school and go outside to play, while girls are expected to handle household chores. Only after finishing the household activities are girls allowed to focus on their homework and studies by their families. For example, I have both female and male children and I am always arguing with my wife because she gives freedom to the boy and household activities to the girl; this is a testimony that even educated families practice traditional gender roles [because my wife and myself are well-educated]. In the general community, there is a big gap in believing in gender equality and practicing towards achieving the equality. Even though there is knowledge, without changing attitudes, practices of gender issues will not change, even among educated families of our community; [thus, there are attitudinal and behavioral gaps in our community]. Moreover, there are positive thinkers in the community, relying on their religious experiences, who protect the safety of both females and males, and respect their rights and needs. Unless we change our attitudes, we cannot find better practices [regarding gender issues]. For example, my wife and I are government employees. Whenever we come home, she goes to the kitchen to prepare family's meal and I stay in the living room without saying let me help you with this matter; this is not a lack of knowledge or attitude, but practice problem. This unequal distribution of responsibilities (which overloads women and girls) primarily affects females.

Inherently, religions or religious holy books do not advocate entrenched traditional gender roles and gender inequalities; but some religious teachings and their interpretations do. A Muslim religious leader (RL-03) and Qur'an teacher shared the following:

When we take our religion (Islam), Sharia gives priority to women; they are our children, our wives, our sisters, and also our mothers. There are two characters in the Quran, such as Surah Maryam (female) and Surat al-Nisa (female). No verses in Qur'an explicitly outline the rights of men; but the rights and respect of women are mentioned several times. As for the attitude of humans, one may say

there is no gender equality, but when we take Sharia, it gives enough rights and share for both [male and female]. Nevertheless, in our community, there is disseminated information as Sharia rule affecting the rights of women, particularly in resource inheritance and resource sharing among males and females. It is true that male and female do not share resources equally as mentioned in Sharia Law itself. Why? Allah is like a doctor 'hakim' and knows everything. According to Sharia law, resource sharing is allocated 1/3 for females and 2/3 for males. This is based on the reality that women do not have the obligation bread win (to be breadwinner) for families and have no responsibilities to engage in activities like farming, construction, or other physically demanding tasks. The responsibility of providing for the family falls primarily on the man's shoulder, unless the woman is willing to take on that responsibility. According to Islamic Sharia law, when a man gets married, it is his responsibility to fulfill his family's needs. As for the woman, her primary role is to take care of the children and household activities. In addition, when a woman gets married, she does not have the obligation to financially support the family, as that is her husband's responsibility. Thus, she does not need to share inheritances and resources equally, as she is not the primary breadwinner. If the husband passes away, the widow has the right to inherit a portion of her late husband's property. In this case, one-third of the resources are considered sufficient for her needs. When we consider the case of a man, he does not have the right to share the resources of his wife, which she had inherited from her family, if she dies, but he has the responsibility of feeding and caring for the family. He also does not have the right to inherit his wife's properties which she had inherited from her family. Man has more obligations and responsibilities than women, and that is why resource sharing and family inheritance were allowed to be only 1/3 for females. Sharia allowed the circumcision of females, and some assumed this was against the rights of females.

This religious leader added,

According to the Islamic Sharia law, the allowed form of female circumcision is limited to cutting only the tip of the clitoris. However, the local community has wrongly interpreted this, and performs extensive cutting of the clitoris. Further, another complaint regarding Sharia law by Muslim women is the restriction on women working outside. Sharia does not restrict females from working within their localities, but it forbids them from going abroad to other countries, due to

the perceived negative effects and harm it may have on them (i.e., to protect them from harm and abuses). Despite Sharia's aim to provide dignity, respect and protection for females, the prevailing attitudes, customs, traditions and communities' practices have significant adverse effects on women and girls.

Regarding women's inheritance, an opinion leader forwarded the following:

While Sharia allows for a 1/3 share of resources for females, in our area, husbands and wives have been sharing resources equally. It is important to support women because they face unique challenges that men do not. Our community should engage women in education and religious studies, as both genders need equal knowledge of their religion.

A Muslim woman who was a key informant addressed that male dominance, in her vicinity, in all aspects of life has been observable. She added that religious leaders are not willing to support (mentor) women and girls with specific problems; they also hold negative bias against us. Her detailed narration is presented below:

Fathers don't care about providing necessary support for their daughters' personal hygiene, clothing, education, or Quran studies. They give more resources, such as plots of land for planting khat and other farms, to the males. They push the females to get married and assume that even if a female gets educated, she cannot achieve much. From my personal experience, my parents did not help me with my education; I had to start education on my own, after getting old enough, and I had to buy everything (educational materials) myself to support my education. My brothers were properly attending both religious and modern education. Finally, I decided to small business to earn money for my educational materials (exercise books, pens, pencils...). Then I joined school and continued my education up to grade 10, supporting myself. After I reached grade 10, my parents forced me to get married (being underage). Thus, from early ages, boys are morally supported and encouraged to pursue their aspirations; whereas, girls are often discouraged by their own parents and relatives. Regarding inheritance, the common practice is to allocate one-third to females and the majority to male. When seeking guidance from religious leaders, we often find that they are unwilling to address the specific problems we face, because they believe women cannot fully explain or discuss their issues well; religious leaders frequently judge individuals based on their wealth or social status rather than their merits. My mother experienced such discrimination when she took the case of her parents' resource inheritance. My mother and her only

brother had resources of their father who passed away 20 years ago. Her brother took all the resources, including their mother's resources (when in fact she is alive). When my mother took the case to the regular court, the court decided that she could not claim the inheritance after 15 years. Then, my mother lost and all the resources were decided for her brother; under all circumstances, men support men particularly if you are female and poor. Compared to the Sharia court, the regular court is better when it comes to divorce procedures and resource sharing; the regular court shares resources equally, for both males and females. The religious leaders undermine the equal rights of women and give everything to men.

A cultural leader (CL-01) key informant confirmed to the major points raised above: preference of women for regular court (against Sharia court), males' superiority, negative attitudes towards women by men and undermining (disrespecting) women and girls. In his words:

There is negative attitude among men towards women; they undermine women! Men also control parents' resources by themselves, disregarding women and girls. This sense of male superiority and entitlement needs to be changed through comprehensive awareness campaigns and educational initiatives. Another deep-rooted cultural bias is perceiving girls and women as born solely to serve at home with household activities; this ought to be actively challenged and dismantled. Further, in our community, there is a practice of prioritization of resources and inheritance for newborn boys over even elder female children. This discriminatory norm reinforces the idea of male children being more valuable and deserving, which further perpetuates gender discrimination. Another point is that women prefer the regular court since they will not get an equal share if they go to the Sharia court. Currently, if a case of a divorce comes to the cultural court, we will take full evidence from both sides and discuss the issues culturally. We [the cultural court] explain everything to them, including the negative consequences of divorce on their children, that she will get 50% share of their resources.... Understanding our advice, most of them agree and go to their homes (leaving the idea of divorce and dropping the divorce case).

On the power of the cultural court in equally handling the needs of females and husbands, and settling matters peacefully (by reducing divorce incidences), another cultural leader (CR-02) gave testimony; he also congruently addressed the other issues raised by the first cultural leader. A gender focal person key informant also witnessed the credibility and fairness of cultural court and cultural leaders. See the following quote:

the traditional court system thoroughly investigates the evidence from both sides, visiting the community and gathering comprehensive evidence from the grassroots level. Finally, they make a culturally informed decision on the distribution of resources. The traditional court has the authority to decide on all available resources for inheritance. In cultural court, both sides are generally satisfied with the outcome, as various issues are considered, and the resources are shared. This helps maintain familial relationships through the application of cultural laws.

Promising points on gender issues and progress towards gender equality were articulated by the gender focal person, a key informant:

The previous fear of women asking for opportunities for their rights and working alongside men has been solved, and women now hold presidential positions in our country. Currently, the trends of job categorization between men and women have been addressed, and men who previously forbid their wives from pursuing different jobs are now allowing and supporting the participation. In recent times, many men have been actively supporting participation of women (their wives) in economic activities. This shift is believed to be driven in part by the need to cope with high levels of inflation in our country. These days, it has become common for husbands to support their wives. For example, in my own family, all of our children have obtained full-time employment, leaving just my husband and myself at home. Moreover, when I make coffee, my husband provides the necessary equipment for the ceremony and helps with other tasks. However, when we examine the situation at Mendera-Kochi Kebele (local administrative unit) level, we find that the trends of mutual assistance between males and females are poor. Women are seen overburdened in this Kebele, and this issue needs to be addressed through intervention. For example, women's economic engagement is poor, and even those with ideas of business are staying at home due to lack of startup capital. Also, we observe that only few men and boys support their parents, while the majority are not helping their parents; they sit on females' shoulders, expecting everything from females.

FGD with girls revealed that traditional (and discriminatory) gender role and gender inequalities are realities in the community. The details go like this, FGD-Girl-04:

My brother was not working in household activities, and even the outside activity and he did not take care of anything at home. My mother was not ordering him to do different activities. The problem is serious, and every load is on the female, including child care; the males are going out, playing, and having a good time with their peers. For females, even academic engagement (studying) is allowed after they finalize the household activities. We have to work on such problems (something has to be done); and if not, many females will continue to be affected and go to the street, some become housemates and males will use them for other purposes (sexual exploitation in that case)

Another girl focus group discussion participant (FGD-Girl-01) added, "The role of household activities is put primarily on the shoulders of females (wives), while husbands provide the majority of the financial support. The females take on household management, including childcare responsibilities." The remaining participants also agreed to these points. One participant (FGD-Girl-06) even illustrated the points very well:

In our country, if a male works and prepares food, it is often seen as an inappropriate or undesirable behavior, as this is traditionally considered female's work. Similarly, if a female, for example, drives a car, it is assumed that she is acting like a male. However, females can also work in construction and other activities traditionally associated with males.

FGD-Girl-03 fully agreed with the aforementioned point and shared her own experiences in relation to the point:

I am supporting my mother by working in woodwork, and the people in our villages say, "Oh, this girl works as a male, what a bad act she performed." However, females can work and survive; this should be respected and accepted. The wrong attitudes of our community towards females were making us not work and earn money even for survival. For boys, it is acceptable to play football, go to school, and return on their own time, without anyone questioning where they were. However, if a female is expected to return home by 11:00, but comes past this expected time, the family will take action against her, while the same is not applied to boys.

Boys focus group discussion participants agreed to the points raised above by the participant girls. For example, FGD-Boy-05 shares the following:

There is no gender equality in our community. More specifically, there is a trend of distinct role assignments for males and females. If someone works on a job assigned to the opposite gender, people undermine the task and view it as shameful. We have to work on the psychological setup of our community regarding gender role.

As mentioned earlier, if a man performs a job assigned to females, they say that he is breaking the norms of society.

FGD-Boy-03 added the following related points:

In our community, the practice of gender equality is low, and there is a trend of job assignments based on gender. For example, if boys try to sell things in the mini-market [selling on the street], the community shames them for taking on a role that is considered to be of females. In such cases, males often do not take on these roles. On the other hand, when it comes to jobs assigned to males such as farming or plowing, females are not participating for fear of public shaming and labelling. To bring about economic development, we have to work together without job assignments based on gender.

FGD conducted with persons with disabilities exposed deep and detailed realities in the community. The problems are very complicated and beyond gender inequalities, for them. FGD-Dis-03 openly forwarded the points, which were shared by all participants:

The community's perception and knowledge of people with disabilities is low. Individuals often judge those with disabilities based on physical appearance. Services provided at various organizations frequently overlook people with disabilities. When we visit offices, there is an assumption that people with disabilities are there for charity rather than being recognized as customers with rights. Currently, access to public services is heavily dependent on the goodwill of office staff. In schools, starting from the compound to classrooms, teaching methods, and even facilities like restrooms are often unsuitable for students with disabilities. For example, individuals with hearing impairments face significant communication barriers when seeking help from health professionals due to a lack of support services. These challenges emanate from lack of awareness, low attitudes and practices. In the workplace, if both individuals with and without

disabilities make mistakes, the blame often falls on the individual with a disability, as their mistakes are attributed to their physical limitations. In addition, in Jimma Town, people in wheelchairs cannot directly access the Town's administration offices (E.g., Office of the Mayer of the Town), because there are no ramps to reach the second or third floor. As the result, we must either arrive early in the morning or late in the afternoon when the administrator is available outside the office on the ground floor, making it difficult to discuss issues in a conducive and confidential environment. Infrastructure problems severely hinder access. Many buildings are constructed without elevators, making them inaccessible to people with disabilities. The lack of consideration for people with disabilities arises from gaps in knowledge and attitudes.

FGD-Dis-01 added on established traditional and gender norms and their impacts:

The division of labor between males and females is dictated by social and gender norms. For instance, if a boy is seen performing household chores in the presence of family members and guests, the reaction may be negative. Guests might question why the boy is behaving in a 'feminine' manner. While a few community members have embraced gender equality by drawing inspiration from various medias, the overall impact has been limited. Movements advocating for feminism have not led to significant changes in community attitudes. Currently, we are witnessing alarming rates of violence against women, which is shocking to us all. While some cases are reported in the media, many incidents remain hidden in individuals' homes. These issues of inequality have persisted through generations, inherited from our ancestors, and we must interrupt this intergenerational cycle. People with disabilities are currently categorized under the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, which indicates a lack of focused attention on their specific needs. Issues faced by individuals with disabilities are often lumped together with gender issues. Given the significantly growing number of people with disabilities in our country, particularly due to conflict, we need dedicated representation at the national level.

Further, FGD-Dis-02 emphasized that there is no knowledge gap regarding gender and disability issues. Rather, in our community, there are clear gaps in attitudes and practices:

Regarding gender issues, I don't believe there is a knowledge gap; rather, there are attitudinal and practical problems. People are aware of the issues surrounding gender and disability, but they often do not apply this knowledge in practice.

4.2. Adverse effects of gaps in KAP around social and gender norms on women, girls, persons with disabilities, and others

A gender focal person, a key informant, mentioned well-being, economic and psychological states of particularly women as detrimental effects, as the result of entrenched traditional social and gender norms, and gender inequalities. She also emphasized that if a woman is negatively affected, there is a high possibility that her whole family will be affected (leading to family crises). Find the details beneath:

We cannot ignore the problems that women face in their daily lives. Many women rely on the money provided by their husbands, and constantly worry about whether that money will be enough to cover the family's expenses. Only God truly understands the challenges that women face in our context. Until we address the concerns of women, our nation cannot progress. We must educate women about their rights and encourage their economic participation. If women suffer, their families (specially, their children) will also suffer. If we do not support women, their children may be forced to seek assistance from others, becoming dependent on external sources. We must prioritize the needs and empowerment of women to ensure the well-being and success of our families and our nation as a whole.

An opinion leader and a religious leader (RL-03) also stated economic effects as serious ones due to embedded social and gender norms in our community for generations. However, another religious leader (RL-01) stressed that the discriminatory gender norms and gender inequalities have had adverse effects on many areas (such as social, political, economic, health and psychological) specially, on women, girls, and persons with disabilities. The details of his explanations can be seen underneath:

Gender inequalities significantly impact the social, political and economic situations of particularly women, girls and people with disabilities. If we take the social relationship, there is no fairness and equal participation. Further, the

excluded groups are affected economically. When we see females' political participation in Jimma (for example), they are less engaged. If we work on the foundation in every aspect of knowledge, attitude, and practices, they will increase their participation and engagement by themselves. Further, children with disabilities are frequently isolated and discriminated against. Even when they venture outside, there are often no accessible facilities at schools or workplaces, to accommodate their needs. There is no wheelchair, and no room for blind individuals; we as a community fail to fully accept disabilities as part of life. Our people are assuming if they are born with full (normal) body parts, they will remain in those conditions. Disability is assumed as a curse from God. Disability is not only natural but we can encounter it at any time and I can be blind in any condition in life, for example. families restrict children with disabilities at home, denying them of outside interactions and opportunities. We assume individuals with disabilities as burdens on us. Individuals with a disability who can break barriers may become influential religious leaders, political leaders, or leaders in other sectors, in our country. For example, if you take from orthodox religion the blind man called Megabi Hadis is very influential; when he speaks, everybody listens to him enthusiastically. He often says "I am blind, but bright-hearted". God had a target when he made them blind, to teach us. However, we express disdain towards those who are blind or with other disabilities; derogatorily referring to them as "blind men" and stuff. We are not working at an early stage starting from KG, elementary, and high school. We need to address disability issues from the grassroots, recognizing that support should not only be offered at higher levels once individuals have faced significant challenges and barriers.

Religious leader (RL-02) stated the economic, social, and cultural effects (of established traditional and prejudiced gender norms) on women themselves, their families, their communities, and the country in general. See the details beneath:

Because of the gaps in education in religious institutions and traditional gender norms, our females were not educated and not seen as equals in the community. As a result, we lost women who could properly care for their children and lead the country. Ignoring women's participation in economic activity, we lost potential income and economic growth. Disregarding women's contributions leads to poverty, as women are forced to rely on their husband's income. There are knowledge gaps among women and they are not aware of how they could

better serve their families. All the problems females shoulder negatively affect them (and their significant others) economically, socially, and culturally.

Aba Gada (Cultural leader, CR-02) stated health problems, unemployment, and substance (drug) addiction as adverse effects, especially on young men and adolescents in the community. The details are presented below:

We educate and raise awareness on diseases and the risks of sexual intercourse outside of marriage which most of the time males engage in. The trend of job inequality leads young males to idleness and addiction, as they end up sitting around without work. The culture of hard work and employment needs to be improved.

Similar to Aba Gada, a Muslim woman key informant also mentioned drug addiction of boys as the adverse effects of biased gender roles and poor parenting:

The families in our community were not guiding their sons. Consequently, the boys were able to go wherever they wanted, doing whatever they wanted (e.g., chewing khat, abusing drugs...) and finally, developed addictions. Even more, one of the boys physically assaulted his father, because the parents had given their son unnecessary freedom and parented him poorly. On the other hand, the girls often do not receive adequate care and attention. The consequences of this neglect will ultimately impact them, in many ways.

Cultural leader (CR-01) added immigration of our young generations (particularly, females) to foreign countries (believing to get more money and improve their future lives) as negative outcomes (because they may face unforeseen unfavorable results such as mental health problems). Explanations are given below:

The negative consequences of gender inequality and the effects of media have led our female population to immigrate to other countries. The appealing argument made to females is that if they go to another country, they will earn more money. Their parents themselves propose this to their daughters, expecting to gain money from them to have their houses constructed by the females' earnings. The community has been exploiting the money that these female migrants earn, despite the immense physical, moral, and psychological costs that the females have had to bear. Even when the female migrants return to our country, they often find that their family members had already spent or wasted the money the females had deposited. This in turn creates other crises

to the females, in addition to the difficulties they had already faced. However, there is a small portion of the community that does hold onto the money sent by the female migrants and allows them to use those savings to improve their lives. This minority group understands the importance of supporting female migrants and enabling them to have a better future. Regrettably, the dominant cultural norms and taboos inherited from our ancestors continue to encourage female migration.

A CBO ('Idir') leader from Jiren Kebele stated that females in the community are highly overloaded with activities, the overstretching exposing them to health problems (even death). See the verbatim below:

The harmful practices and biases surrounding gender issues in our community can have detrimental effects on hard-working females in various dimensions. For example, in our community, the majority of the hard workers are females, while the males often sit back and observe the females. This imbalance can overburden the females, leading to high workloads that can even result in health issues or even death.

Detrimental psychological, health and economic consequences of discriminatory social and gender norms were addressed by a social affairs representative (a key informant). She detailed the issues as follows:

The trend of females' discrimination has significant psychological impacts on women. They are unable to effectively advocate for their rights due to societal pressures. There is also a lack of awareness around family planning and pregnancy-related issues, including problems like fistula. Due to their low economic engagement, women often lack the financial resources for proper healthcare. This economic deprivation leads them to seek out options like immigration, urban migration, and resorting to various forms of commercialized sexual activities for survival. Thus, the combination of psychological, health, and economic challenges faced by women due to discriminatory social and gender norms is extremely damaging. Educating communities and addressing these multi-faceted issues are crucial to empowering women and promoting gender equity.

A key informant from 'Abdii Borii' microfinance institution (a saving and credit cooperative) raised the prevalence of child marriage in the communities and the detrimental health, psychological and economic effects of this practice:

Early marriage of females often deprives them of necessary support leading to further losses for the individual, the family, and the nation, leading to health problems (e.g., fistula), lack of education, and economic setbacks. That is, the practice of teenage marriage often leads to early pregnancy for females, which could result in the development of a fistula. This would cause health problems, and the mother might not be able to provide proper care for her child. The psychological pains experienced by these women are also serious concerns for the survivors, families, and the general communities.

The complicated and multi-faceted effects of child marriage were also addressed by a woman key informant with disability:

Our people were encouraging females to marry early, believing that they would not be able to give birth as they got older. The girls have been facing economic problems by marrying those with poor socioeconomic status. If a female grows up in a discriminatory environment, she is likely to repeat that experience with her child (i.e., intergenerational cycle of suffering). In addition, marrying girls to older men (e.g., for economic benefits) is also a common problem in our communities. The consequences of this malpractice can include HIV/AIDS, underage pregnancy, fistula, economic crises, and even death.

Girl FGD participants shared the widespread child marriage in the communities and its all-rounded adverse effects (similar to the ones addressed by the two key informants above). For example, the detailed explanation by FGD-Girl-04 is presented as follows:

The issue of early marriage is complex, with various parts of the community exerting influence. In a given early marriage scenario, most family members likely urge a girl to marry, downplaying the importance of her education. The community may even question where the other educated women are (may say, nowhere!), pushing her to accept her family's desires, claiming the marriage will benefit her and her family. The young woman faces pressure from her family, her prospective husband's family, and the wider community. She may find herself in a dilemma, ultimately deciding to marry, even if she waits until completing her education. This trend of early marriage needs to stop. At least, mothers and family members should stand up for their teenage daughters, allowing them to reach 18 years and complete their education. Early marriage at the age of 15 can

lead to significant health problems due to the consequences of pregnancy, which can even result in death. The men who propose (and perform) these early marriages often do not apply the same things to their mothers and sisters. Once married, many men may not allow their wives to continue their education or work outside the home, expecting them to stay and serve with the household activities. In a rare case, men are open to allowing their wives to work outside the home and contribute to positive changes within the family. Further, families often recommend early marriage, reasoning if a 'better' (rich) man comes along, they will allow the marriage (because they will financially benefit from the marriage themselves); this is, obviously, wrong mindset and self-centeredness, in the expense of the lives of their own kids. Sadly, the peer and community pressure girls to marry older men (for economic benefits), often with a significant age gap.

Participants of FGD with persons with disabilities shared similar, as above, adverse effects (i.e., social, economic, political, health, psychological...) particularly on women, girls, and people with disabilities, because of traditional and gravely discriminatory social and gender norms in communities. FGD-Dis-03, in addition, emphasized unemployment and underrepresentation as serious negative aftermath specially for persons with disabilities:

There are instances where individuals with disabilities pass all exams, only to be told they cannot be hired because the work environment is not suitable for them. Currently, around 98% of individuals with disabilities in Ethiopia are unemployed. Many assume that people with disabilities are incapable of contributing, but they strive to engage fully due to the fear of being blamed for failures attributed to their disabilities. The approximately 30 million people with disabilities in Ethiopia often do not receive attention, even during election campaigns. If disability issues were prioritized in elections, candidates could win positions by advocating for her/his marginalized group.

In addition to the above-addressed adverse effects (including the ones related to child marriage), all boy FGD participants mentioned the implicit impact of sending boys differentially to better schools:

The gender gap between boys and girls in education has been persistent. For example, they may send boys to better schools while sending girls to ordinary schools, due to a low level of awareness about the importance of gender equality (and girls' education) in the family and general community. To understand why

boys are sent to better schools while girls are sent to ordinary schools, we can look at the family dynamics. The father may send the male child to a better school to support and favor him. Meanwhile, the mother may allow the female child to remain in an ordinary school, as she expects the daughter to support with household activities. Families often assuming the males will stay with the family for a longer period, while the females will eventually leave the family (taken by others, through marriage). This bias even extends to providing more food for the male children. Within families, there is a divide in attitudes towards educating girls. While some families agree with sending females to school, the other half still do not allow their daughters to attend better schools, or even prevent them from going to school altogether.

4.3. Gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and effective intervention strategies

First thing first: awareness raising and addressing knowledge gaps in the community. As stated by one of the religious leaders (RL-02),

Awareness creation, on gender norms and gender equality, by religious leaders, government officials, and community elders in unison should be the first step. Unless we address the knowledge gaps in the community, we will not be able to make progress towards ensuring gender equality. Further, training needs to be provided to our community on children's education and caregiving (positive parenting). It is also important to empower women and girls in our community. Religious leaders should take the main role in educating our community through different awareness-creation initiatives.

On the issue of disciplining and parenting children, a cultural leader (CL-01) said that father and mother should discuss and agree on how to take care of their children (equally, for boys and girls); they should apply similar agreed upon principles and disciplinary approaches to achieve better results. He further said,

If their ideas are separated, their children cannot reach the desired stage; the consensus of a family is important for proper child growth and development. In particular, taking care and respect for girls is important; and following girls in a special way compared to boys is central to protect and guide them. Special attention should also be given to people with disabilities. School environments should be favourable for people with disabilities.

To bring positive attitudinal and behavioural changes regarding gender issues in our community, the intervention needs to be comprehensive, targeting families, schools, local community structures, religious institutions, and many more. This point is well explained by one of the key informant religious leaders (RL-03) as follows:

Crucially, the principle of gender equality should be reflected first and foremost by the mothers themselves. Even if the community provides special care and treatment for boys, that same level of care and consideration must also be practiced for girls within the household and beyond. Fathers should also give equal care, resources and opportunities for both boys and girls. The other issue goes to religious leaders to educate their followers on developing positive attitudes towards gender equality and inclusivity. For true progress toward gender equality, religious teaching and guidance need to be made more understandable and accessible to the community in ways that promote equal rights and opportunities for women and girls; religious followers ought to understand the details. Finally, it must be noted that until attitudes and practices change at the family, religious leadership (institutions), schools (including religious schools), and community-based organizations levels, it will be difficult to expect meaningful and lasting progress toward true gender equality in our community.

A community elderly key informant who is an opinion leader also strongly supported the above-mentioned points. He said, "We need to work on these problems collaboratively with the local government officials, cultural leaders, influential figures, community elders, Aba Gadas, religious leaders, and other stakeholders. Such insightful ideas and commitments are indeed crucial to narrow down gender inequalities (and discriminatory gender norms), and ensure gender equality. Aba Gada (CL-02) added, "religious leaders, cultural leaders, and community elders should educate people on the importance of a culture of hard work and equality between men and women, and boys and girls. Poverty, the main source of gender inequalities, cannot be solved without changing our work ethic and practices."

Working on the self-awareness of religious leaders focusing on their gaps in contents and religious teaching techniques can help ensure gender equality and disability-inclusion by positively bending social and gender norms in the community. Concerning this point, a key informant religious leader (RL)-01 said the following:

As educators within the community, we the religious leaders have a fundamental responsibility to first educate and empower ourselves before we can effectively

guide and teach others. Those who are educated must update themselves first before educating and positively influencing others. The issues of gender and disability need to go beyond superficial acknowledgment. Particularly, gender inequality is real and visible in our community. For example, in our country with 60 to 70 million women, we cannot find more than 100 women who are visibly prominent on stage or in front of public eyes. Every time we observe situations in Jimma Town, we see the same or familiar women/girls being featured on different stages. If we give new faces opportunities and empower them, why don't we find a diverse range of females represented across the various stages? Why do we feature the same Jiren female on the Town's stage and the same Jimma Town females on the Seka district stage? Why don't we give new girls and women opportunities? Moreover, we religious leaders have to educate (teach) according to the religious dogma, concerning the problems. For example, Christianity explains that the first person to announce on the coming of Jesus was St. Mariam (Mary: a female), and many verses in the Quran discuss similar issues as well. Thus, religious leaders should educate their followers accordingly. Indigenous knowledge and religious doctrines should be practiced properly. We need to be role models too; as the saying goes, "if the children of teachers become lazy, and the children of police officers become thieves, there is no way to be a model." Religious leaders who do not educate their own families cannot effectively guide others; so, change must begin with religious educators themselves.

Promoting the favourable attitude that women and other marginalized segment of the community are active contributors can significantly lessen the problems. "First, we need to reach a consensus on the core issues before we can plan solutions together. We should consider women and those with disabilities as valuable contributors, not burdens" said RL-01. This religious leader further explained that interventions ought to address the underlying gender-related problems within the community to have sustainable effects. Providing financial assistance alone cannot solve community issues and bring real change in the community; it rather encourages high dependency on external organizations.

It is suggested that established traditional gender roles and malpractices that work against women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized individuals should be seriously worked on. A gender focal person key informant emphasized that

malpractices on early marriage, circumcision and discrimination against people with disabilities need to be improved through engagement with all stakeholders. She added that empowering women and creating job opportunities for them can help fight the multi-faceted gender-based violence and warrant gender equality. A key informant interviewee with disability stressed the seriousness of gender-based violence in the community; she experienced genital mutilation herself and suffered a lot during childbirth or labour. So, this is another area that needs effective intervention. A social affairs focal person also shared the aforementioned points and explained her ideas further as follows:

We expect various organizations to train, support, and engage our women in economic development. Empower them economically assist in changing the habits of work and improve their economic status. This includes providing child-rearing training and family support. Our local community (kebele) does not have enough resources; thus, the government, NGOs, and local authorities need to organize women's initiatives and support them in their social, economic, and personal development.

A key informant from 'Abdii Borii' microfinance institution (a Saving and Credit Co-operative, SACCO) also added that economic support, among others, will be important for improving women's income status.

It was found out that in particular in Jiren Kebele young women and girls establish relationships with older men solely for financial benefits, their poor families cannot satisfy their needs. A Muslim key informant woman from Jiren area described this and other situations as such:

If awareness is provided, females will not enter into unnecessary pregnancies. Due to a lack of awareness, girls have sometimes entered into relationships with older individuals to obtain money, for instance, for the purchase of menstrual products and other stuff. Therefore, support from various organizations is important. Families can provide for their children's basic needs, but they may not be able to cover all expenses, which expose the girls to other problems. Females need moral and economic support. They can do everything with strong moral and financial support, but they often require startup capital. Further, husbands, most of the time would not treat their wives psychologically, and even harm their children. Women need advice, care, encouragement and support, rather than maltreatment and abuses; but, men in our community affect women's psychology by saying unnecessary (abusive) words. Once a man and a woman

get married, they have to respect each other, instead of harassment. If there is no respect, they will go for divorce. Thus, most males/husbands in our community need to be aware and get educated on the females' rights and respect.

In congruent with the above critical points, a key informant from Jiren Community-Based Organization (CBO, 'Idir') added the following suggestions:

The first step we must take is to provide continuous or sustainable awareness-raising efforts to our community, especially on gender-based violence. Training ought to be given for men on how to take care of their partners or wives because if we men provide genuine care and support for women in our community, they will feel happier and motivated more to embrace positive change. Showing love and care for the women can help improve their psychological well-being. Moreover, interventions addressing gender equality and support for people with disabilities need to be implemented not only by NGOs but also by government organizations. Religious institutions should also actively work on gender issues, focusing on upholding the rights of women, children, and people with disabilities. The awareness-raising efforts must be sustained and continued until we reach our desired goals.

Males' dominance and superiority in the community should come to an end, and efforts to ensure gender equality ought to be continued with concerted efforts, by engaging different key stakeholders. FGD participants of girls and boys unequivocally and consistently reflected these points. They also stressed that, as community members, they have to learn from the experiences of other countries and cultures that do well in treating all members (including people with various disabilities) of their community equally and fairly. Particularly, to create job opportunities and accessible infrastructure for individuals with disabilities, policy-level changes are needed; and to realize this, advocacy from all parties is required. Meaningful efforts should also be made to minimize discrimination against persons with disabilities. A lively FGD was conducted with seven persons with disabilities. Among many points raised, a point forward by one of the participants (FGD-Dis-07) and approved by all of them read as follows:

Discrimination against individuals with disabilities and the lack of respect for their rights must be addressed. We, as people with disabilities, should work to showcase our talents and change the prevailing narratives. The knowledge gap regarding disability issues must be bridged through targeted interventions.

5. Discussions and conclusions

The main objectives of this gender analysis study were to pinpoint gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of religious, cultural and opinion leaders, as well as others around social and gender norms; to examine detrimental effects of these gaps and gender inequalities on members of the community; and to devise gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and effective intervention programme.

The first finding of the present study revealed that more or less religious leaders, cultural leaders, opinion leaders, women, men, girls, boys, persons with disabilities, gender focal person, social affairs focal person, representatives of CBO and SACCO had high knowledge (particularly, among educated participants), but low attitudes and practices around social and gender norms. In other words, from their experiences, the study participants have had understanding of the concept of gender and the division of roles, gender mainstreaming and gender equality (gender knowledge); but they lack mindset, beliefs, and emotions towards gender equality (gender attitude) which can influence their behaviour and decision-making. Gender attitudes are the beliefs, perceptions, or endorsements that people have about gender norms. Gender norms are widely accepted social rules that define the roles, behaviours, power and status associated with masculinity and femininity in a given culture — i.e., they are informal, often implicit rules of masculinity and femininity that guide people's attitudes and behaviours; they also shape values, practices and behaviours that matter. In the present study, there is a gender division of labour within the household, with women and girls expected to shoulder most domestic and care work. Thus, what the participants know and what they can essentially do in real-life is quite different. Furthermore, the situation is even more intricated for women and girls with disabilities who encounter several material problems and difficulties in their daily lives, relating to the specific nature of their disability. They face discrimination when obtaining credit and other income-generating resources, as well as barriers to accessing decent housing, health services, education and employment. They are infrequently included in economic or political decision-making¹⁵.

In relation to the above finding, previous study conducted in Ethiopia and Mexico also reported significant gender gaps at home, at work, or in public with regard to women's and girls' educational outcomes, participation in the labour market, pay, informality

¹⁵ Andrews, R., Garin, M-C., Lemonnier, C., Pécourt, S. (2020). Gender and disability: Inspiring practices from women and girls with disabilities addressing discrimination and violence in Africa.

status, and hours of unpaid childcare, housework and many more due to deep-rooted unfavourable attitudes and practices¹⁶. In Ghana, gender inequalities continue to persist because of cultural gender norms that promote and favour men and put women in subordinate and submissive roles. These cultural gender norms broaden gender inequality between men and women in different system levels of society. That is, cultural gender norms influence gender role socialization in the home, which then transmits to the school and religious institutions as the mesosystem. At the school level, cultural gender norms act as a mesosystem evident through discriminatory classroom practices, gender role assignment of school responsibilities, and gender role representations in textbooks. Besides, in Christianity and Islam, cultural gender norms create doctrines that enforce men's domination over women, and, in the workplace, cultural gender norms have gendered labour by defining a man's occupation and limiting women to domestic and low-paying occupations. The mass media is the exosystem that shows images of women to fit cultural gender norms of what is defined as acceptable for women. Finally, the macrosystem is the overall sociocultural norms that have been accepted by society that perpetuate discriminatory practices against women¹⁷.

The second finding showed that the gaps mainly in attitudes and practices around social and gender norms are attributable to religious teaching, established traditional norms, cultural practices, lack of education and entrenched poverty. In the context of the present study area, the burden on women and girls increases because of poverty and social exclusion (are systematically denied access to rights, opportunities, and services based on gender). That is, women and girls in poor households spend more time on unpaid care because of lack of resources, basic services, adequate infrastructure and time-saving technology. Further, women and girls are responsible for cooking, cleaning, collecting water and firewood for domestic use, caring for the ill, elderly and children. These tasks demand a lot of time, undermining opportunities for women and girls in terms of education and income-generation and their chance to rest¹⁸. Similarly, women encounter with several inequalities and violence because of socially assigned lower positioning; the hierarchies based on power make women face

¹⁶ Wright, A. (2020). Closing the Gender Gap: Women's Rights in Ethiopia and Mexico. *Global Majority E-Journal*, 11.

¹⁷ Nartey, Portia; Sensoy Bahar, Ozge; and Nabunya, Proscovia (2023) "A Review of the Cultural Gender Norms Contributing to Gender Inequality in Ghana: An Ecological Systems Perspective," *Journal of International Women's Studies*: Vol. 25: Iss. 7, Article 14. Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol25/iss7/>

¹⁸ UN General Assembly (2013). Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.

subordination and violence. Gender-based violence, for instance, occurs due to the disadvantageous position of women compounded by poverty and illiteracy¹⁹. Gender inequality, as reported in earlier study, may also be rooted in poor governance, and inadequate social and religious institutions²⁰. Another previous study also reported that the status of women in relation to gender division of labour, control over income and leadership, for instance, are heavily influenced and reinforced by culture and traditions²¹. Further, insecurity, political corruption, patriarchal cultural norms are key barriers that prevent women from realizing specially their economic rights²². In addition, religious beliefs, teachings and practices have a profound influence on societal expectations, reinforcing traditional gender roles and contributing to the perpetuation of gender inequalities. There is a complex interplay between religion and gender, with religious affiliation often associated with more conservative gender attitudes and the acceptance of gender-based violence²³.

The third finding of the present gap analysis study revealed that particularly on women, girls and people with disabilities, the gender inequalities have adverse psychological, health and well-being, social, decision-making power and economic effects. This finding concord with the prior study that stated gender inequality continues to reproduce itself in hidden and ambivalent forms and leads to invisible barriers in women's careers and lives²⁴. For example, gender norms' strong influence can harm the health and wellbeing of women and men, girls and boys in many ways — i.e., they influence access to health information, the perceived value of the individual and their power to make decisions about their own health, risk-averse or risk-prone behaviours, health-seeking practices and access to health services. As the result, women and girls delay accessing the care they need, have difficulty in completing treatment, or are forced to use informal healers²⁵.

¹⁹ Dahal, P., Joshi, S.K. and Swahnberg, K. (2022). A qualitative study on gender inequality and gender-based violence in Nepal. BMC Public Health, 22; <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-14389-x>

²⁰ Iqbal, A., Hassan, Sh., Mahmood, H., Tanveer, M. (2022). Gender equality, education, economic growth and religious tensions nexus in developing countries: A spatial analysis approach. <http://www.cell.com/heliyon>

²¹ Enhancing Opportunities for Women's Enterprises Programme (2017). Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) Study of Women's Economic Empowerment. SNV, Kenya.

²² UN Women (2016). Knowledge, attitudes and practices survey on women's economic rights in Afghanistan.

²³ Philomena O. Huberman, Ph. O. (2023). The Role of Religion in Shaping Gender Norms and Attitudes: A Case Study of Tanzania. International Journal of Culture and Religious Studies, 4. www.carijournals.org

²⁴ Gurieva, S.D., Kazantsevaa, T.V., Mararitsaa, L.V., Gundelakh, O.E. (2022). Social Perceptions of Gender Differences and the Subjective Significance of the Gender Inequality Issue. Psychology in Russia: State of the Art, 15.

²⁵ Stavropoulou, M. (2019). Gender norms, health and wellbeing

The fourth finding disclosed that gender-sensitive, disability-inclusive, and workable-comprehensive intervention strategies can help reduce gender-related problems, and ensure gender equality. An intervention is said to be gender-responsive when the different needs, abilities, barriers and opportunities of all stakeholders such as girls, boys, women and men are identified, considered and accounted for²⁶. Gender equality is the concept that women and men, girls and boys have equal conditions, treatment and opportunities for understanding their full potential, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to and benefitting from economic, social, cultural and political development. True equality means that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Furthermore, gender equality encompasses working with men and boys, women and girls to bring about changes in attitudes, behaviours, roles and responsibilities at home, in the workplace, and in the community. That is, gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men and girls and boys are taken into consideration, realizing the diversity of different groups and that all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes and prejudices about gender roles²⁷.

The fourth finding specifically showed that addressing gaps in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in gender issues, disability-inclusivity, women's and girls' empowerment in the communities is key and irreplaceable. This encourages social inclusion of the poor and vulnerable by empowering people, building resilient communities, and making institutions accountable to the people they serve. When a society invests in girls, for example, the effects are deep for the girls, multiple for society and a driver of sustainable development. So, what is women and girls' empowerment all about?

Empowerment of women and girls is the expansion of choice and strengthening of voice through the transformation of power relations, so women and girls have more control over their lives and futures; it is a process of ongoing change through which women and girls expand their aspirations, strengthen their voice, and exercise more choice. Empowerment consists of three domains: power to (a woman or girl's ability to

²⁶ Education Cannot Wait (2023). Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

²⁷ USAID (2012). Gender equality and female empowerment

make decisions and act on them), power within (a woman or girl's sense of self-esteem, dignity, and self-worth) and power with (a woman or girls' strength gained from solidarity, collective action, or mutual support)²⁸. More comprehensively presented, empowerment of women and girls concerns women and girls gaining power and control over their own lives and destiny. It involves awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality. Women and girls must also have the agency to use their rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions²⁹. Empowering girls through education, for instance, leads to improved health and well-being, economic empowerment, social and political participation, and overall empowerment. Investing in girls' education and empowering women can create a brighter future for all and build a world where everyone has equal opportunities and rights, regardless of gender³⁰. Women's empowerment as an economic, political, and sociocultural process challenges the system of sexual stratification that has resulted in women's subordination and marginalization in order to improve women's quality of life³¹. Economic empowerment, for example, allows women in controlling and getting benefit from resources, assets and incomes. It also grows ability to manage risks and improves well-being. It refers to women's ability to make strategic life choices which had been previously denied them³².

Protecting persons with disabilities (specially, women and girls) who experience discriminations and violence, and strengthening their access to public facilities, protection of their rights, legal protection and social inclusion should be the central part of an intervention package that aims at ensuring gender equality and disability-inclusiveness³³. Because women with disabilities are more likely to experience domestic violence and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence as women without disabilities — i.e., Women and girls with disabilities are both disproportionately affected by violence and subject to unique forms of violence because of their lack of education, limited opportunities, and the absence of an enabling environment to

²⁸ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2017). A conceptual model of women and girls' empowerment. <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/>

²⁹ UNICEF (2017). Gender Equality: Glossary of Terms and Concepts

³⁰ Dhiman, B. (2023). Addressing Gender Disparities in Access to Education: A Systematic Review

³¹ Chen, Y-Z. and Tanaka, H. (2014). Women's Empowerment

³² Mahbub (2021). Women Empowerment; theory, practice, process and importance

³³ Pratiwi, A. et al. (2022). Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion in Practice: Research and Advocacy Experience of Knowledge Sector Initiative Partners.

promote empowerment (and income-generating activities) and due to discrimination and stigma resulting from their gender and their disability. Information on prevention, treatment and support is often limited and not inclusive: many women with disabilities do not know their rights, the procedures for reporting violences and abuses, or where to seek assistance medical and psychosocial support regarding this issue. Also, these services are inaccessible to certain women due to their diversity. Women and girls with disabilities often experience violence at home, in cities, in rural areas, in public transport, at schools and in hospitals. They suffer from certain forms of gender-based violence such as early marriage, female genital mutilation (affecting their physical and psychological health due to excessive bleeding and serious infection caused by the objects used for cutting), withholding of education (as disability is often perceived as a bad omen or sign, it is believed that women with disabilities cannot succeed in life and that giving them an education is a waste of money). Inclusion of women with disabilities and their financial autonomy are pre-requisites to protecting them from violence, exploitation and other forms of abuse. Service providers must take into account the needs of women and girls with disabilities in order to adapt and develop programs that effectively serve them. Cultural and religious leaders can also create positive changes in the communities, specially, focusing on women, girls and persons with disabilities; mainly because there is deep-rooted belief in our communities that men are superior to women, which explains why women are under-represented in decision-making bodies and insufficiently involved in the economy³⁴. For women and girls with disabilities, the problems are even worse. Placing persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls with disabilities, as central actors in the implementation and monitoring of an intervention programme, is a successful road for their empowerment and key to upholding their rights. Mainstreaming disability in the broader women's rights movement is also proven to be useful³⁵.

To achieve meaningful changes, targeting families, schools, local community structures, relevant government offices, religious institutions, religious, cultural, opinion leaders, public figures, women, girls, men, boys and people with disabilities will significantly help. Because most of the participants of this gap analysis study are aware of (have knowledge) the discriminatory gender norms, it is possible to work on attitudes

³⁴ Rebecca, A., Marie-Charlotte, G., Clara, L. and Sophie, P. (2020). Gender and disability: Inspiring practices from women and girls with disabilities addressing discrimination and violence in Africa.

³⁵ Pecourt, S., Quan, S. (2023). Protecting Women and Girls with Disabilities from Violence and Upholding Their Rights: Making It Work Methodology. In: Rioux, M.H., Viera, J., Buettgen, A., Zubrow, E. (eds) Handbook of Disability. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-1278-7_34-1

that guide their behaviours (practices). Taking actions on discriminatory norms typically requires addressing reinforcing factors concurrently. For example, a gender-discriminatory norm may be experienced primarily within the household but be held in place by local custom, perceptions of what is required by religious tradition, stereotyping in the media, certain groups' economic interests or the political interests of particular constituencies³⁶.

Inequality in women's enjoyment of their rights is often deeply implanted in tradition, culture and religion, with violations originating from social custom, belief or practice. That is, religion is only one of many explanatory factors for inequalities, violations, discrimination, alongside economic, political, cultural, social, and historical factors. Most of the world's religions are open to a multitude of different interpretations; thus, we should be committed to promote constructive engagement on the understanding of religious texts. Religious doctrines, traditions and norms can present powerful narratives and framings that encourage and justify exclusion, discrimination and oppression. But religion can also be a strong source of motivation and mobilization in struggles for inclusion, equality and non-discrimination. Multitude of voices exist within religious groups and institutions, including faith-based actors who campaign for the rights of women and girls, and work to promote gender equality within their faith. Religious leaders, communities and organizations can also be key players in peace-building and conflict resolution, encouraging co-existence, forgiveness, and tolerance³⁷.

Particularly, religious actors can play significant roles in combating, for example, religious misconceptions around contraception and family planning by lifting the taboo around discussing these issues and by advocating for a change in national laws. They can use religious teachings and texts to highlight the negative impacts of, for instance, gender-based violence (GBV) and child marriage. Some religious actors have embraced religious interpretations that encourage women's participation in decision-making positions. Further, bringing institutionalized communication and coordination between religious and secular actors, among others, can support efforts of ensuring

³⁶ Marcus, R. and Harper, C. (2014). Gender justice and social norms: processes of change for adolescent girls

³⁷ Petersen, M.J. (2020). Promoting freedom of religion or belief and gender equality in the context of the sustainable development goals: A focus on access to justice, education and health.

gender equality and promoting women and girls' empowerment³⁸. Similarly, prior findings reported that interventions that emphasize and leverage cultural strengths and religious practices offered a useful approach to combat entrenched social problems, even in extreme environments³⁹. Still other previous research findings revealed that religion, religious leaders and religious communities often contribute to prevention and response of violence against women and girls, and to gender equality and non-violence. They realize these by prioritizing religious literacy, by expanding understanding of how religion affects the lives and safety of women and girls, by recognizing the role and potential of religious experience, and by strengthening collaboration between secular and religious actors⁴⁰.

Faith-based and traditional actors were found to hold power over community attitudes as influencers on social norms, as sacred ritual holders and as informal or formal culture keepers. Equipping faith-based and traditional actors to first change their own mindsets and then to be a part of challenging harmful social norms. Addressing the roots of harmful practices and beliefs, by working with faith-based and traditional actors to adapt rituals surrounding underlying belief systems so that they no longer do harm to women and girls. Engaging these actors around entrenched harmful social norms, and not merely with condemning practices only, would add significant value. Faith-based and traditional actors can have success in sustaining community-based interventions by engaging early with top-level religious actors, and by engaging those who might be more supporting of gender-equal norms. More importantly, ensuring that women religious and traditional actors are meaningfully represented and involved in programme design, implementation, and decision making is vital⁴¹.

³⁸ Khalaf-Elledge, N. (2021). Scoping Study: Looking Back to Look Forward. The Role of Religious Actors in Gender Equality since the Beijing Declaration. Washington DC; Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI).

³⁹ Warren, M.A. et al. (2024). Leading Change by Leveraging Cultural Strength: When Religious Leaders Champion Gender Equity with Religion as a Strength

⁴⁰ Roux Elisabeth, and Pertek Sandra Iman (2023). Religion Matters: On the Significance of Religion in Global Issues

⁴¹ Le Roux, E. and Palm, S. (2021), Learning from Practice: Engaging Faith-based and Traditional Actors in Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls (New York, United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women).

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the gap analysis, the following recommendations are given:

- Context-appropriate, well-designed and small-scale projects (like Grow Equal Project) can play a significant role in shifting discriminatory (and harmful) norms and practices among their target groups (and even beyond).
- Challenging discriminatory norms needs actions on several factors concomitantly. Because gender norms are kept in place by multiple factors simultaneously; norms relax when people — i.e., women, girls, men, boys, religious, cultural and opinion leaders, as well as key government stakeholders — cross boundaries of traditional gender roles
- Supporting education of boys and girls, which enhances their knowledge and nurtures their aspirations, is decisive in interrupting the intergenerational cycle of gender inequality in our communities, and in shaping norms.
- Engaging religious leaders and institutions, encouragement of gender-sensitive religious education, promotion of interreligious dialogues, and supporting existing grassroots initiatives that empower women, girls and persons with disabilities can transform gender norms
- Intensive work ought to be done on religious, cultural and opinion leaders, as well on government service providers to help them practice what they preach.
- Access to medias, information and communication technologies, and exposure to alternative discourses, values and modes of social organisation are associated with rapid change in gender norms. These issues, too, can be considered for Grow Equal Project.
- Opinion leaders and role models — e.g., community leaders, religious figures and other girls/boys or women/men who challenge particular norms and can be seen as living testimony that new norms can lead to positive outcomes — play critical roles in catalysing norm change through influencing attitudes and changing practices.
- Schools should be involved in addressing traditional gender and social norms, because many households can be reached through students and schools' staff.
- There needs to be capacity-building support (practical skills training), instead of monetary and material support, to empower communities to help themselves and be resilient.
- For the poor and marginalized groups of communities to get quality and sustainable services, institutions should be strengthened; regardless of whether individuals change or remain in their positions, the services must continue.

- School environment, health institution services, and transportation should be inclusive and considerate of people with disabilities.
- To curb youths' drug use and abuse, as well as to ensure their health and well-being, there should be playgrounds designed for youths for their sport activities (such as football, basketball, volleyball...). Supporting them with sport materials will also help.

7. Acknowledgement

First and for most, I would like to thank SOS Children's Village Ethiopia, Jimma for giving me this opportunity. The participants of this gap analysis study also deserve many thanks. I am also deeply grateful to the data collector (and transcriptionist) Gutama Haile, and participants recruiter and facilitator Ahmed Abdo; their contributions were immense in obtaining adequate and quality data.

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9. Annexes

Key Informa Interview (KII) Guide

Prof. Berhanu Nigussie's Consultancy Firm

(Dhaabbata Gorsaa/ አማካሪ ድርጅት)

Jimma Town, Oromia, Ethiopia

Section I: Written consent (To be signed by a key informant/ an interviewee)

✓ Hello! Good morning/Good afternoon! My name is _____. I came from Prof. Berhanu Nigussie's Consultancy (Dhaabbata Gorsaa/ አማካሪ ድርጅት) which supports SOS Children's Village Ethiopia Jimma in undertaking a gap analysis on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of religious, cultural, and opinion leaders around social and gender norms for Grow Equal Project in Mendera Kochi and Jiren Kebeles of Jimma Town. I need your reflections on this area. If you agree to participate in this gap analysis/study, I will ask you a couple of questions on this topic. The interview may take about an hour. If you have any question, you may ask now. If you want to ask later, please contact the principal investigator, Prof. Dr. Berhanu Nigussie (0920848795). Are you willing to participate?

I certify that the purpose and potential benefits of this gap analysis have been explained very well.

Name of interviewee (Code)

Signature

Date

Dear the participants,

- The facilitator may gracefully interrupt you only to bring you back on track or for clarity issues
- Keep all ideas exchanged confidentially
- Do not share details of the interview later with others
- I would like to start recording the interview and taking notes, and start the audio recorder.
- The main reason of the notes is to make sure that the information collected is specific

Section II: General information of the setting

Date: -----

Time: -----

Place: -----

Name of the interviewer: -----

Section III: General information of the interviewee

Name: -----

Educational Level: -----

Responsibility/Role: -----

Experience on this role (in year): -----

Sex: -----

Section IV: Interview guide/questions

- What are your knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices around social and gender norms?

Probes: Tell me more on social and gender **norms** (Seera hawaasummaa fi saalaa ykn sirna koorniyaa hidda gadi fageeffate / ሥር የሰደዱ የማህበራዊ እና የፆታ ደንቦች), **roles** (gahee hojii/ ሚናዎች) associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other, their access to/ distribution of resources and ability to make decisions. Example, household activities and less paying jobs for women and girls

- What are the gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices around social and gender norms?

Probes: Explain more on the difference between what individuals know, belief and can actually do in real-life. E.g. on discrimination in education, child marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence (sexual violence) and unrecognized domestic work

- What are the negative influences of possible gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices around social and gender norms on the children, adolescent girls, women, men and people with disability?

Probes: Would you reflect on gender roles deeply believed and practiced by family, authority figures, medias, and other influential people, and their negative influences on these groups? Example, when individuals or groups do not “fit” into established gender norms, they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion. Right? May you reflect on this too?

- What possible intervention mechanisms can you recommend/ indicate for gender-related problems in this area/Kebele?

Probes: Explain more on the acquisition/maintaining of the right knowledge, attitudes, and practices where women and men, girls and boys all enjoy equal rights, resources, opportunities and protections. What about empowering girls and women? ...

- I finished my questions! What other ideas/points may you add to the knowledge, attitudes and practices of gender issues in this Kebele?

Thank You So Much Really/Guddaa Galatooma!!

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Prof. Berhanu Nigussie's Consultancy Firm

(Dhaabbata Gorsaa/ አማካሪ ድርጅት)

Jimma Town, Oromia, Ethiopia

Section I: Written Consent (To Be Signed By Discussion Participants)

✓ Hello! Good morning/Good afternoon! My name is _____. I came from Prof. Berhanu Nigussie's Consultancy (Dhaabbata Gorsaa/ አማካሪ ድርጅት) which supports SOS Children's Village Ethiopia Jimma in undertaking a gap analysis on the knowledge, attitudes and practices of religious, cultural, and opinion leaders around social and gender norms for Grow Equal Project in Mendera Kochi and Jiren Kebeles of Jimma Town. I need your ideas on this topic. The discussion may take 30-90 minutes. If you have any question, you may ask now. If you want to ask later, please contact the principal investigator, Prof. Dr. Berhanu Nigussie (0920848795). Are you willing to participate?

I certify that the purpose and potential benefits of this gap analysis have been explained very well.

Name of interviewee (Code)

Signature

Date

Dear the participants,

- Be respectful when others speak
- The facilitator might interrupt discussion, but only to warrant that everyone has an opportunity to speak and no one person dominates the discussion
- Keep all discussion confidential
- Do not share details of the discussion later with others
- I would like to start recording the focus group discussion and taking notes, and start the audio recorder.
- The purpose of the notes is to ensure that the information collected is precise

Section II: General information of the setting and participants

Date: -----

Time: -----

Place/Kebele: -----

Sex of FGD participants: Male Female

Number of participants: -----

Age of FGD participants:

☐ 10-14 years

☐ 15-19 years

☐ 20-24 years

☐ 25-40 years

☐ Over 40 years

Others, specify: _____

Section III: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides/questions

- What are your knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices around social and gender norms (Seera hawaasummaa fi saalaa ykn sirna koorniyaa hidda gadi fageeffate / ሥር የሰደዱ የማህበራዊ እና የፆታ ደንቦች)?

(Probes: Example, household activities and less paying jobs are meant for women. For example, if Husen (not his actual name) cooks for his family and takes care of his kids, what would be his neighbors' and most other men's reactions and action be?)

- What are the gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices around social and gender norms?

(Probes: Explain more on the difference between what individuals know, belief and can actually do in real-life. E.g. on discrimination in education, child marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence and unrecognized domestic work)

- What are the negative influences of gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices around social and gender norms on the children, adolescent girls, women, men and people with disability?

(Probes: Example, when individuals or groups do not "fit" into established gender norms, they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion. Right? May you reflect on this? More specific example, Jemila

(not real name) refuses marriage at 15 years, dropping out of her school, despite strong interests from her parents and neighbors. What would most other girls in Jimma say about Jemila's decision? What negative influences her peers' reactions may have on Jemila?)

- What solutions can you recommend for multi-faceted gender issues in this Kebele?

(Probes: Example, having right knowledge, attitudes, and practices where women and men, girls and boys all enjoy equal rights, resources, opportunities and protections. What about empowering girls and women, as well as persons with disabilities)

- I am done with my questions! What other points could you add to the knowledge, attitudes and practices of gender issues in this Kebele?

Thank You So Much Truly/Guddaa Galatooma!!