

ALiGN

Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms



BRIEFING

Projecting Futures

Exploring teachers' and students' perspectives on gender in rural Peru

Melissa Wong Oviedo and Paul Spurzem | April 2019

Key messages

- Gender-related norms and expectations can either inhibit or serve to empower the lives of boys and girls. The Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms (ALIGN) programme sought to assess the impact of the Visionaria for Schools (VfS) initiative on gender norms and attitudes of teachers' and students' future aspirations, behaviour and important life decisions in rural secondary schools in Cusco, Peru.
- While traditional gender norms marked differences in expectations for and by students, VfS has enabled students and teachers to reflect more consciously on gender norms and has given participants a stronger sense of decision-making autonomy.
- To affect change, clear and consistent educational policies are needed regarding gender and gender equality. Educational institutions need to be supported in understanding gender bias through measures such as teacher training and lesson plans so that gender-based social norms in the classroom can change.

Introduction

Research has shown that schools are institutions where social norms – generally plagued by discrimination and inequality – can be reproduced and exacerbated (Illich, 1971; Harber, 2004; Osler, 2006; Reay, 2009; Francis and Mills, 2012). This is particularly concerning when social norms and beliefs based on gender cause girls to be sexualised, afraid and accommodating towards others, while also demanding that boys restrain their emotions and attach value to their power, physical strength and dominance over others (Sadker and Sadker, 1986; Robinson-Keilig et al., 2014). As such, schools can perpetuate damaging stereotypes and imbalanced power relations, and can reinforce social inequality and discrimination rather than empower students (Harber, 2004). However, through targeted efforts, schools also have the potential to produce and foster new social norms based on equality (Unterhalter et al., 2014).

Box 1: The political context of gender equality and education in Peru

In December 2016, the Peruvian Ministry of Education (MINEDU) approved a new national curriculum for schools that included an emphasis on gender equality. This was interpreted by some as an attempt to educate children on gender identity, and prompted conservative backlash and nationwide protests under the banner '#ConMisHijosNoTeMetas' ('Don't mess with my kids') that continues into 2019 (Peruvian Times, 2019). Conservative policy groups in Peru explain that they are 'concerned with the terminology associated with the word "gender" since it tends to be used, in the ideological sense attributed to it, by radical or gender feminism' (Stewart, 2017).

The new curriculum has withstood legal challenges attempting to remove all reference to gender from the curriculum, eventually conceding to remove a small part of the original phrasing, that '...masculinity and femininity is constructed day by day' (MINEDU, 2018). Gender equality remains one of seven new 'cross-cutting foci'* that teachers, students, management and administrative personnel are asked to demonstrate, described as:

Valuing the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of men and women equally. In a situation of real equality, the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of men and women do not depend on their biological nature, and therefore, they have the same conditions and possibilities to exercise their rights and develop their development of society and everyone who is part of it. (MINEDU, 2016: 363)

However, this ongoing national controversy highlights a need for greater clarity and understanding of gender and gender-related norms in both educational and daily social contexts in Peru.

* These include: interculturality, attention to diversity, gender equality, environment, rights, striving for excellence and working towards social good.

Projecting Futures

The Projecting Futures project had two main research components. The first examined dominant gender-based attitudes and expectations held by separate groups of male students, female students and teachers participating (intervention) and not participating (control) in the VfS programme. The second research component sought to identify the impact of VfS on gender norms by comparing the attitudes of intervention and control participants, as well as using data from surveys of VfS students (n=275) and teachers (n=8) before and after participating in the programme. This briefing note outlines the results of the research efforts and what they mean for gender-norm change in the secondary school context in rural Peru.

Visionaria for Schools (VfS)

Visionaria Network¹ launched the VfS programme in 2017, with the goal of enabling secondary school students to contribute to sustainable development projects in their community. It trains and supports teachers to facilitate an innovative 'Visionaria

1 Visionaria Network is a United States-based educational non-profit organisation founded in 2016 (more information can be found at <http://www.visionarianetwork.org>)

course' that focuses on three core thematic areas: empowerment, leadership and sustainable development. The year-long course includes approximately 50 teaching hours and activities that engage students to reflect on their personal lives and social interactions. While several classroom lessons create opportunities for young men and women to counteract negative or limiting gender stereotypes, one specific lesson, titled 'social roles and norms' discusses gender norms and expectations directly (see Box 2). The VfS course culminates in the creation of community advocacy messages by student teams, which are presented as an opportunity for each student to engage with leaders in the sustainable development of their communities.

Box 2: Exploring social roles and norms in VfS

VfS seeks to generate a greater understanding and recognition of gender norms by guiding teachers (during training) and students (during class) to recognise and discuss the prevalence of social norms and stereotypes assigned to men and women. The lesson which addresses gender norms most directly (although gender norms are discussed and prompted in several other lessons), entitled 'Social roles and norms', spans approximately three classroom hours and prompts students to identify the characteristics and responsibilities they believe to be typical of a man and a woman, and then to determine which of these are related to their biological sex or socially influenced gender. The lesson continues with a discussion about the typical and ideal characteristics of men in society, and whether or not adolescent male students meet all of these characteristics, how they feel about these social pressures and expectations, and whether or not they think any of these expectations can or should change. The lesson then prompts the same questions for female students and concludes with an assignment for students to reflect on whether or not these expectations influenced their 'tree of life' (an activity earlier in the course that helps students represent their past, their present, their achievements and future goals), and how.

In 2018, Visionaria Network reached an agreement with the Provincial Ministry of Education of the Anta province in Cusco, Peru (see Box 3) to implement the Visionaria course as part of the 'Personal, civic and civil development' curriculum in 12 of Anta's 32 public secondary schools. Through this partnership, 22 teachers were assigned to the VfS programme by their school directors. Of those originally assigned, 16 (6 male, 10 female) finished the teacher training programme and 12 trained teachers completed the course schedule with 438 students (approximately 55% male, 45% female) between the ages of 15 and 17 years.²

Participating teachers were trained by Visionaria Network's Cusco-based staff members to facilitate the Visionaria course during a series of three two-day workshops at the start of each trimester. They also received one-to-one mentorship by professional coaches throughout the year and at completion they received a combined certificate from Visionaria Network and the Provincial Ministry of Education, which included 120 hours of professional development credit that counted towards pay-grade advancement for tenured teachers.

Students who completed the programme formed over 70 teams and produced targeted advocacy messages to relevant state and community stakeholders to address a particular key issue, such as: river pollution, illegal deforestation, alcoholism and discrimination against those with disabilities. These key issues were identified based on the personal experience and motivations of students, combined with new knowledge of existing initiatives and perspectives explored during the Visionaria course's sustainable development and project-based activities.

Box 3. Anta province, Cusco, Peru

The Anta province is in the highlands region of Peru, northeast of the city of Cusco. There are 9 districts and 76 recognised rural communities (comunidades campesinas). Of the total population, 52.2% are considered urban and 47.8% rural. The majority of the population self-identify as Quechua (85.1%), with the second ethnic group being Mestizo* (11.2%). A large proportion (85.1%) of the population are literate.

* In Latin America, Mestizo is a recognised ethnicity, comprising of mixed European and native origins.

² An additional 138 students undertook parts of the Visionaria course, but their four teachers could not complete the course schedule for various reasons.

Research design

Projecting Futures employed a photovoice process (Wang and Burris, 1997), focus group discussions and subsequent thematic analysis to understand and contrast gender norms held by 24 students (12 male and 12 female) and 11 teachers (5 male and 6 female). The photovoice process granted participants the opportunity to analyse and express their attitudes and sentiments by taking photographs and adding narrative captions to explain the meaning and intention behind selected photographs. These photographs were discussed as a group during the second of two workshops and were catalogued on a dedicated project website.

Photography assignments focused on Projecting Futures' three thematic areas: (1) students' future aspirations, (2) behaviour in class and (3) important life decisions. To explore each theme further and answer the associated research questions (see Box 4), additional themed activities were conducted during the second workshop (see Box 5).

Box 4: Themed project research questions

Research questions were put forward to teachers and students based on the three main thematic areas of the Projecting Futures project:

1. Future aspirations:

For teachers:

- What post-secondary-school futures are expected for male and female students and do these differ based on their gender?
- What barriers are expected as limiting students' ability to reach their desired future and do these vary based on their gender?

For students:

- What post-secondary-school futures do students feel that their teachers expect of them and does this vary because of their gender?
- What do students expect for themselves and does this vary because of their gender?
- What barriers do students identify as limiting their abilities to reach their desired futures?

2. Behaviour in class:

For teachers:

- What behaviours are expected of male and female students in class based on their gender and how are these reinforced?

For students:

- What behaviours do students feel are expected of them and the opposite sex in class, and how do they feel these are reinforced by their teachers?

3. Important life decisions:

For teachers:

- What life decisions are expected for male and female students to make and do these differ based on their gender?

For students:

- What life decisions do students think they make and others make for them, and do these differ because of their gender?
- What life decisions do students think that the opposite sex is able to make?

To determine if and how the VfS programme influenced gender norms held by teachers and students, the qualitative research process was conducted with a selected group of teachers and students who were participating in the 2018 VfS programme (the intervention group) and teachers and students who were not participating in the programme (the control group) (see Table 1). Intervention teachers were recruited according to a set criterion which included age, years of teaching experience and place of birth to represent the VfS programme teacher population. Control teachers were selected to match intervention teachers. Intervention students were selected from one urban and one rural school, representative of where VfS had been implemented. Across both intervention and control groups, specific students from selected schools were invited to take part by their teacher based on their availability and likelihood to commit to the research process.

Box 5: Additional themed activities conducted as part of Projecting Futures

- Activity 1 'Symbol selection': Symbols representing different levels of income, academic attainment, influence and job position were provided to participants, who were then asked to select one from each category that represented their (or their students') expected future achievement levels [topic: future aspirations].
- Activity 2 'Word generation': Participants were asked to write words that came to mind when seeing the photos of male and female students generated by the group [topic: behaviour in class].
- Activity 3 'Decision-makers': Participants were asked to select the person(s) who make decisions in their (their students') lives and that of the opposite sex [topic: life decisions].

Table 1. Participating control and intervention groups

	24 Students		11 Teachers	4 Schools
Intervention (VfS participants)	6 boys participating in VfS 2018 Mean age:14	6 girls participating in VfS 2018 Mean age:15	5 teachers (3 females and 2 male) participating in VfS 2018 Mean age: 40	5 participating in VfS 2018 (4 rural, 1 urban)
Control	6 boys not participating in VfS 2018 Mean age:15	6 girls not participating in VfS 2018 Mean age:16	6 teachers (3 females and 3 male) not participating in VfS 2018 Mean age: 41	2 not participating in VfS 2018 (1 rural, 1 urban)

Analysis

Thematic and comparative analyses were conducted on the resulting data from the workshop activities and tasks. This data includes photographs, photograph captions/narratives, transcripts from group discussions and gender-specific pre- and post-survey questions.

Results

The results are outlined in two subsections:

- Prominent gender norms shared by teachers and students across control and intervention groups in relation to each thematic area of focus.
- Differences in views expressed by control and VfS intervention groups, which alludes to the impacts of the VfS programme.

Gender norms in the Anta province

Theme 1: Post-secondary school aspirations

Pursuing higher education was the central expectation held for and by male and female students. Although all groups expressed that career type was the choice of the student, example careers given by teachers and students for male students to pursue were in the hard sciences and business, and did not include any that are considered traditional for females to undertake. Some examples were given for females in the hard sciences (e.g. engineer), but they also included more traditional careers for their gender, such as nursing, beauty and the social sciences. Likewise, non-professional career types were determined by local gender roles, for example working in the field for males and selling at the market for females.



Photo by male teacher from control group representing a possible future for his students in five years' time.



Photo by female teacher from control group representing a possible future for her students in five years' time.

Academic capacity was not expressed by any group as limiting students' ability to reach their goals, but gendered barriers and risks were, including early or unplanned pregnancies for girls and substance abuse leading to alcoholism for boys. The perceived ramifications of these futures differ greatly among male and female students and teachers.

Pregnancy was identified by teachers as a barrier to achievement rather than representing a future in itself, based on the fact that it would limit a female students' ability to continue studying in and beyond secondary school. Pregnancy was expressed as restricting females' lives and as following the same path and perceived low achievement of their mothers. Teachers were very aware of the prevalence of young motherhood in the communities as a norm that continues from past generations.

Interestingly, teachers did not identify pregnancies as a barrier that would limit male students' futures, and strongly targeted their discouragement towards female students. Girls recognised that if they became pregnant it could potentially interfere with their studies, but would not necessarily stop their education if they had the support of their families. They gave examples of other classmates being able to continue with their studies after getting pregnant, but made no mention of family planning. The negative impacts of pregnancies were seen as optional for males, with male students only recognising it as a barrier limiting females, not for themselves. These perspectives represent a common expectation for females to take greater, if not complete, responsibility for child-rearing. More equal constructs of paternity are not being reinforced among male students.

Though most male and female teachers shared that they would – and have – supported female students in continuing to study through pregnancy, one female teacher in both the intervention and control group said they would not support pregnant female students in continuing to study. Their argument was that this would be a bad influence on other females, a concept underpinned by conservative norms that place blame on the female. Moreover, no teacher connected this perceived issue to a need to better inform their students about their sexual and reproductive rights and health.

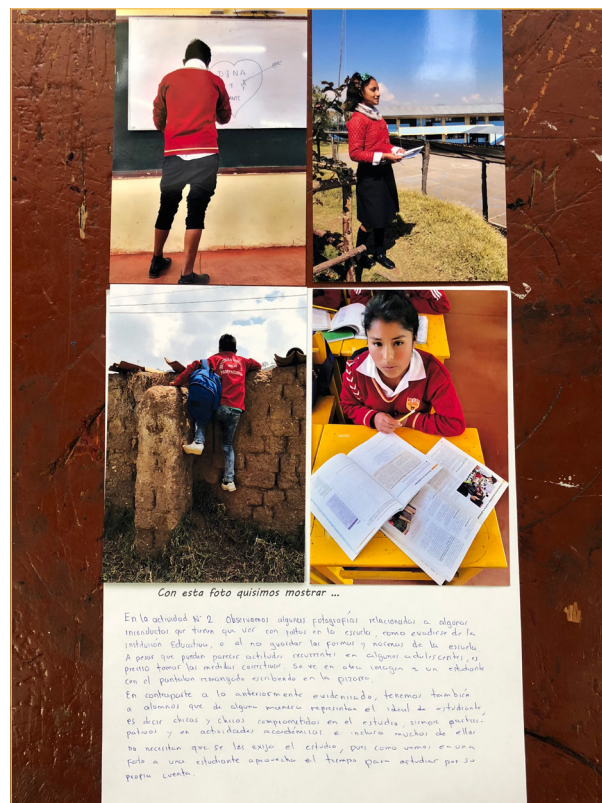
Alcohol consumption, leading to alcoholism, was the most common risk and undesirable future identified for male students. Teachers explained how male students were exposed to alcohol consumption when working in the field alongside men in the community as a tradition to cope with hard physical labour. While seen as undesirable, the consequences of alcoholism were not perceived as negative for boys to the same degree as pregnancy was for girls.

Theme 2: Classroom behaviour

Tasked with taking photographs of ‘ideal’ classroom behaviour, girls emerged as the primary example of the ideal student according to teachers, while photos of boys captured ‘non-ideal’ student behaviour. This gender bias was shared by all groups, who cited negative male behaviours such as being ‘very relaxed’, ‘behaving badly’, ‘creating distractions’ and ‘not listening’ in class. On the contrary, female students elicited thoughts of responsible, obedient and disciplined behaviour, agreeing that they also ‘took the lead in class activities’.

Other characteristics expected for male and female students did not focus on their condition as students, but on their embodiment of traditional gender constructs of masculinity and femininity. For female students, these included being docile, feminine, sensible and sensitive. For male students, groups shared expectations about being tough, loud and aggressive.

Traditional gender norms influenced social interactions and classroom dynamics in various ways. Being a ‘lady’ was strongly reinforced among female students and included the aforementioned feminine characteristics together with a clean and elegant appearance. On the other hand, though groups expressed that males should behave like ‘gentlemen’ – which encompassed being respectful, sensitive to females and well presented – this was not a strong expectation. Participants accepted male students’ display of traditional constructs of male masculinity, even though the characteristics were perceived as negative. In the classroom, everyone independently agreed that male students required harsher disciplinary methods. Even male students accepted that they needed repeated and more severe disciplining to change their behaviour, while softer treatment was deemed necessary for females. These differentiated disciplining methods were justified by and reinforced the relationships among students based on female sensitivity and male aggression.



Photos generated by a male teacher from control group to the prompt: ‘take a photo of an ideal and non-ideal male and female student’.

Theme 3: Important life decisions

Decisions of physical freedom – where can I go? where can I not go? how can I move around (transport)? – generated discussion by all groups around young females needing to be protected. Protection of young females was regarded as a concern for all (parents, teachers, females, males, siblings etc.), but more emphasis was placed on males providing this protection. Female students reported that they were especially protected by older male siblings while male students only showed concern over their female siblings, noting that female siblings needed protection and were more at risk than themselves.

The perception that females need protection was justified, even by female students themselves, by the belief that they were more vulnerable than young males in society. Their vulnerability was linked to their physical safety. Teachers particularly held this view, reporting that they worried more about their daughters’ safety than their sons. Male students echoed this. Young males needing protection was not a concept shared in the discussions. A typical exchange was:

Researcher: ‘do you agree with this? I saw that you nodded, by the parents, or in general do you see that they limit girls more? Do they protect them more?’

Male student: ‘Yes’

Researcher: ‘And why do you think that?’

Male student: ‘Because they are more vulnerable, for example they don’t let my sister go out, but for me, it’s normal.’

(Intervention group)

Pregnancy appeared to be the biggest consequence of not protecting and limiting female freedoms. It was talked about as a phenomenon that happened to girls due to poor decision-making, but equally, if not more so, as something that was out of

their control (i.e. without their consent), thus warranting greater protection for females. Among all teachers and students, only one female teacher in the intervention group commented on the role of males in family planning and child-rearing. There was no mention of educating a young woman's sexual partners or of deterring their aggressors.

When it came to the decision of when to start a sexual relationship, teachers and students considered this responsibility as one that young people make for themselves. However, in discussion, teachers expressed a concern that if female students had the same physical freedoms as males they were likely to end up pregnant, again justifying higher levels of parental control over young women. Female teachers, presumably raised according to the same assumptions, did not immediately recognise the imbalance between the agency of male and female adolescents in their decisions about sexual activity.

Control over young females tended to focus on restricting their physical movement, keeping them at home, or limiting where they could and could not go, as well as how late they could stay out. Intervention group teachers recognised this difference in protection and freedom of mobility:

Female teacher 1: 'But that is what we used to hear before, because he is a boy (varoncito) it doesn't matter if he doesn't come [home] to sleep, he must be with his friends, its ok. But for a girl to not come [home] to sleep, she must be pregnant, we have to take her to the hospital, we must get her checked for everything.'

Female teacher 2: 'Yes.'

Male teacher: 'Yes, [take her] to the doctor.'

(Intervention group)

Impact of the VfS programme on the perspectives of teachers and students

Comparison of photos, narratives, discussions and group activities revealed that VfS intervention teachers and students displayed a higher propensity for reflection on social norms than the control groups, and held more positive expectations for post-secondary futures and autonomy in decision-making. Data from pre- and post-surveys of the teachers and students taking part in the VfS programme support these findings. Overall, the results suggest that, by raising teacher and student expectations, the VfS programme changed perspectives based on gender biases and, in particular, female students' feelings of personal disadvantage.

Intervention teachers are able to reflect on norms that limit student aspirations.

Intervention teachers led a more reflective discussion on norms and stereotypes than control teachers. Intervention teachers identified similar stereotypes, but went further to note those which discriminated against people from rural communities and limited rural students' belief in their capacity to achieve. They also reflected upon how their own expectations were influenced by gender-related social norms when discussing what they think female and male students might achieve. On the other hand, control teachers saw that students limit their own aspirations in accordance with the low economic and academic levels prominent in the communities.

Greater reflection by intervention teachers on the influence of social and gender norms can likely be attributed to the VfS programme's emphasis on recognising examples of these norms with teachers (while in training) and students (when teachers lead the same activity within the classroom). Intervention teachers referred to the VfS 'limiting beliefs' activity and concept eight times when articulating the existence of social norms and beliefs that limit their students' aspirations.

Intervention teachers have more positive future expectations for students.

A comparison of the types of photographs taken by intervention and control teachers shows that intervention teachers hold a more positive view of both male and female students' futures. When asked to take photographs to represent their students in five years' time, control group teachers generated photos that represented lower levels of achievement, which were marked by traditional gender roles including undesired expected futures (alcoholism and pregnancies) and unskilled future work possibilities (market work, corner shop assistant, sales assistant for females and motorbike driver, day labourer and builder for males). For the same task, intervention teachers did not generate a single image representing an undesired future for their students, and only shared one photo of an unskilled occupation (day labourer). Instead, their photographs and captions referred to higher education and idealistic, intangible futures, such as the values that students should aim for (see photos).

These more positive aspirations for students by intervention teachers can be explained by the VfS programme's emphasis on the potential that students have in achieving their goals. VfS course lessons and rhetoric help students to articulate the

positive futures they envisage for themselves. These activities increase a teacher's exposure to their students' aspirations and encourages them to focus beyond the immediate challenges that their students face.



Photo (left) collage from a female control teacher. Narrative reads: 'With this photo, I wanted to show ... that after school, ex-students leave the community to different provinces and find work in shops, transport agencies or as independent [workers] as taxi or tricycle drivers, as many of them don't count on moral or financial support [from their families].'

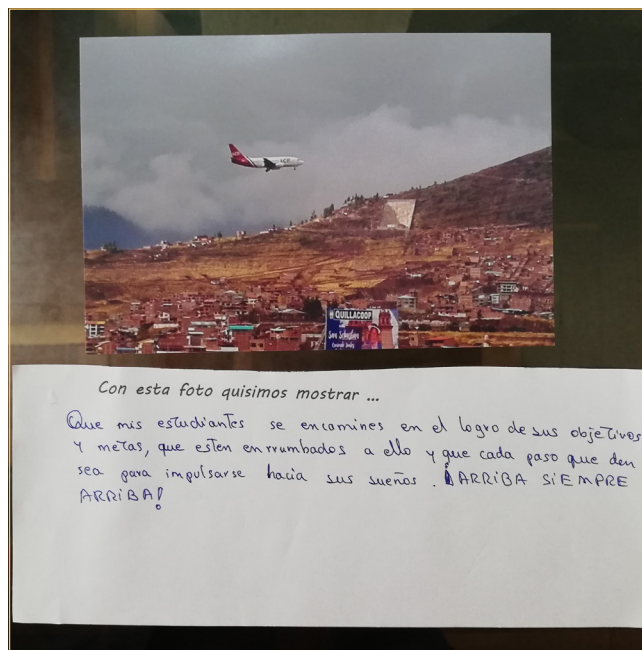


Photo (right) from a female intervention teacher. Narrative reads: 'With this photo, I wanted to show ... that my students should lead paths to achieve their objectives and goals, that they should be guided by that, and that each step that they make takes them towards their dreams. Upwards, always upwards!'

Intervention teachers show less gender bias and an increased confidence in applying the new curriculum.

Analysis of the third workshop activity, 'Decision-makers', showed that intervention teachers hold more equitable views and grant more autonomy to boys and girls. Out of 14 different decisions, intervention teachers indicated an equal number (9) for male and female students to be solely at the students' discretion. This is compared to the control group teachers, who claimed eight decisions to be at the sole discretion of male students, and seven to be at the discretion of female students.

The two specific questions that differed were: 1) 'where can I go?' and 2) 'where can I not go?'. For these questions, control teachers claimed parents as the sole decision-maker, while intervention teachers indicated that these decisions are made by boys and girls jointly with their parents. Moreover, intervention teachers indicated that a boy, as well as their 'partner', made the decision of 'when can I have children?'. Including the female partner in a male's decision to have a family was discussed at length by intervention teachers while it was absent among the control group.

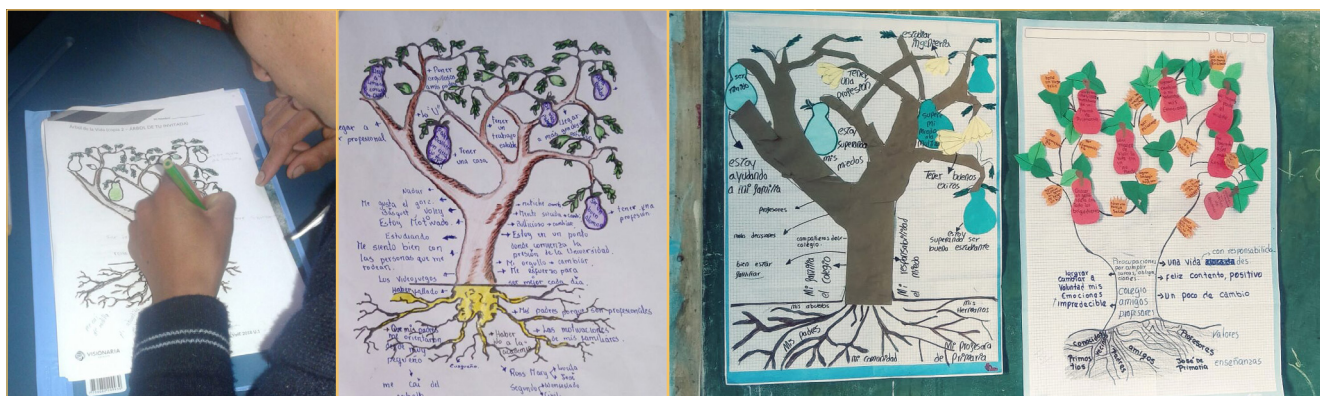
Pre- and post-VfS survey data show a reduction in intervention teachers' agreement with the notion that 'boys are more capable than girls in the sciences and technology' towards greater disagreement (-24% change, ending in an average of 1.63 on a scale of 6). There was also a substantial increase in intervention teachers' agreement with the notion 'I trust my ability to modify and align my teaching methods to the new curriculum' (+27%). This greater confidence in the application of new curriculum concepts and cross-cutting foci – like gender equality, rights, diversity and interculturalism – was likely influenced by the extra attention given to these topics by the VfS programme. This includes the provision of information on social issues and creating opportunities for open discussion and reflection. Likewise, VfS teacher training includes pedagogical tips and interactive lesson activities to enhance a teacher's engagement with students around social issues.

Intervention students hold high aspirations for themselves as well as for the opposite sex.

Differences that emerged during the 'Symbol selection' activity – which were further reflected in survey data – indicate higher aspirations held by students who participated in VFS than the control group. Both male and female intervention students selected the symbols representing the highest possible achievement levels in all categories listed, and did not discount the opposite sex's potential achievement. Control group students selected symbols representing varying lower levels of future potential achievement for their own and the opposite sex. Female students from the control group selected symbols representing lower levels for their highest potential 'income' and 'job position' categories than any other group (selecting 'middle-income' and 'mid-level worker', respectively).

Survey data from VFS students shows an initial agreement with the statement 'boys and girls have the same capacity to be successful in their professional lives' (4.85 average out of 6), and a greater agreement at the end of the year (rising to 5.12 on average, with +4% average increase by male respondents, +8% for female). While VFS students on average still slightly agreed with the notion that their 'gender limits what they can do in life', they were in less agreement with this statement having completed the VFS programme (ending with 3.59 on average, decreasing -11% for girls and -6% for boys). This indicates diminished feelings of disadvantage because of their gender following completion of the VFS programme.

This difference could be attributed to the VFS programme's emphasis on every student's ability to be a leader of their own life, and that social expectations should not limit the potential they see in themselves. The VFS 'Tree of life' activity helps students articulate their past, their present, and the achievements they are reaching for. VFS students would have likely heard examples of aspirations from their male and female peers, and subsequently became more aware that aspirations do not have to differ based on gender.



Examples of the 'Tree of life' worksheet for students (left) and larger poster examples created for instruction (right)

Intervention students, particularly females, show less gender bias and feelings of personal disadvantage.

During activity three ('Decision-makers', which explored students' perceptions of the issues on which they could take decisions independently), both male and female students from the VFS intervention group selected a higher number of decisions to be made independently compared to students in the control group. Female intervention students showed the highest level of perceived autonomy, assigning the most number of decisions to themselves and the opposite sex than other groups (13 out of 14 decisions).

When discussing decision-making of young females, teachers raised the issue that women had very little decision-making power within the communities in general. Therefore, the higher levels of perceived autonomy displayed by intervention group females may arise from VFS activities that reinforce self-confidence in decision-making. Reflection over limiting norms in society may also contribute to intervention group females overcoming restrictive beliefs about female decision-making in society. This is corroborated by pre- and post-VFS student survey data that show the number of boys in agreement with the notion that 'women should be included in decision-making in their lives' increasing by 22% while the proportion of girls in agreement increased by 15%, compared to baseline survey data. Furthermore, VFS student survey data show a decrease in the proportion of boys and girls in agreement with the statement 'I feel that my gender (being a man or a woman) limits me from achieving my dreams' (by -8% and -6%, respectively). Male and female control students reported similar levels of agreement compared to the larger baseline survey of VFS program participants.

Overall, the biggest difference identified between control and intervention groups is amongst female students regarding perceived autonomy and aspirations. Together with the survey results outlined in this section (3.1.2), our analysis shows that the VFS programme had the biggest impact on reducing feelings of disadvantage and raising aspirations among female students.

Policy and programme recommendations

Projecting Futures has highlighted the prevalence of gendered norms within the school context that propagate discrimination and inequality in society. The integration of gender equality in the new curriculum is a necessary step towards changing these norms in Peru. However, this can be an overwhelming prospect for any educational institution and its teachers. Changing gender norms and related practices is a process (Muñoz Boudot et al., 2012) for which teachers need to be continuously supported and guided in order to effectively introduce new concepts and classroom dynamics to their students (Karlson and Simonsson, 2011).

Policy recommendations

- **There must be clear and consistent educational policies and definitions regarding gender and gender equality, and their relation to gender-based issues.** Educational policy around gender and gender equality should be clear and consistent, in order to raise awareness among the general public and to avoid the type of controversy seen in Peruvian society today. This can be done by contextualising discourse on gender through common gender-based issues like teenage pregnancies, alcoholism and gender-based violence.
- **Educational institutions should be provided with materials to guide and contextualise an understanding of gender bias in society and the classroom.** Definitions of gender equality and gender norms remain abstract, and classroom materials lack specific examples of how gender norms influence every day life and decisions. Given Peru's diverse mountain, coastal and amazon regions, these educational materials and examples need to be informed at regional and provincial levels to resonate within each school community.
- **Investment is needed in training opportunities for teachers to develop an awareness of gender-based social norms in the classroom.** Space should be created during teacher trainings that enable reflection on gender norms and that provide the flexibility, encouragement and practical tools for teachers to use alternative pedagogy to engage students in similar exercises and the sharing of views within the classroom.
- **New lesson plans should be developed to allow male and female students to express their aspirations and demonstrate their leadership skills.** Simply learning about different personal aspirations can change gendered expectations and perceived limitations among students by considering the potential of individuals, irrespective of their gender.

Conclusions and programme recommendations

- **Personal aspirations and societal challenges should be used as a way to reflect on gender norms. In combination with activities that specifically promote reflections on gender, broader discussions about societal challenges can encourage questioning about gender norms.**

Students reported that they liked VFS lessons as they increased their understanding of wider societal problems – problems that they were then able to identify as affecting their current and future lives differently because of their gender. Furthermore, after sharing personal opinions and experiences through the VFS programme, students explained that they understood their classmates better. This greater personal awareness and empathy is critical to seeing past gender and in addressing any particular gender norm that might limit expectations of students' achievement and potential currently.

- **More guidance should be given to teachers about how their language can reinforce stereotypical gendered characteristics and behaviours.** Attitudes around the characteristics of masculinity and femininity were the least affected by the VFS programme. Explicit discussions and activities about gender were designed to raise awareness of where assumptions and biases appear in our daily thoughts about what it means to be a man or a woman. However, this initial step did not prove sufficient to change the way teachers and students talked about the characteristics of male and female students.

Even though teachers in the VFS intervention group appeared more conscious of outdated stereotypes – such as girls being ‘more responsible’ and boys ‘more capable of leadership’ – their greater awareness did not translate into changes in their daily discourse. Also, the increase in discussion around gender norms and stereotypes did not reduce intervention teachers’ explicit reinforcement of feminine and masculine characteristics among students.

- **Shifts in gender norms need to be monitored through a mix of methods.** In this project, discussions and photovoice activities drew out concerning gender norms across all participant groups, which would not have been identified through surveys alone. Though qualitative research methods require substantially more resources to reach smaller sample sizes, investing in a mixed-methods approach can help identify shifts in attitudes more accurately by identifying differences between perspectives held about gender and real manifestations of these.
- **It should be acknowledged that changing gender norms is a process that requires constant reinforcement.** Gender norms are constantly reinforced through everyday interactions. In order to change gendered attitudes and behaviours, a similarly consistent and long-term approach is needed.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge Paola Saldivias (Visionaria Network), Adriana María Navarro Rojas (Visionaria Network), Dr. Anita Shankar (Johns Hopkins University), Genevieve Smith (ICRW), and Paola Pereznieto (ODI) for their technical advice and contributions to this project’s design, analysis, and briefing note.

References

- Francis, B. and Mills, M. (2012) 'Schools as damaging organizations: instigating a dialogue concerning alternative models of schooling' *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 20(2): 251-271
- Harber, C. (2004) *Schooling as violence*. London: Routledge
- Illich, I. (1971) *Deschooling society*. First edition. New York: Harper & Row
- Karlson, I. and Simonsson, M. (2011) 'A question of gender-sensitive pedagogy: discourses in pedagogical guidelines' *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood* 12(3): 274-283
- MINEDU – Ministerio de Educación (Peruvian Ministry of Education) (2016) *Programa curricular de educación Secundaria* (Secondary school curriculum). Lima: MINEDU (<http://www.minedu.gob.pe/curriculo/pdf/programa-curricular-educacion-secundaria.pdf>)
- MINEDU (2018) 'Sobre el enfoque de igualdad de género y el currículo nacional de la educación básica ('A gender equality approach and the national education curriculum'. 20 March.). Lima: MINEDU (<http://www.minedu.gob.pe/n/noticia.php?id=46159>)
- Muñoz Boudot, A., Pettesch, P., Turk, C. and Thumala, A. (2012) *On norms and agency: conversations with women and men about gender equality in 20 countries*. Washington, DC: World Bank
- Osler, A. (2006) 'Excluded girls: interpersonal, institutional and structural violence in schooling' *Gender and Education* 18(6): 571-589
- Peruvian Times (2019) 'Conservatives make new efforts to remove gender focus from government education program', Peruvian Times, 16 January (<http://www.peruviantimes.com/16/conservatives-make-new-efforts-to-remove-gender-focus-from-government-education-program/31056>)
- Reay, D. (2009) 'Making sense of white working class educational underachievement' in K. P. Sveinsson (ed.) *Who cares about the white working class?* London: Runnymede Trust
- Robinson-Keilig, R., Hamill, C. And Gwin-Vinsant, A. (2014) 'Feminist pedagogy in action' *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 38(2): 292-297
- Sadker, M. and Sadker, D. (1986) 'Sexism in the classroom: from grade school to graduate school' *The Phi Delta Kappan* 67(7): 512-515
- Stewart, K. (2017) 'Protesting progress: school books with section on gender equality cause uproar in Peru', Vice News, 21 March (https://news.vice.com/en_us/article/4349dd/school-books-with-section-on-gender-equality-cause-uproar-in-peru)
- Unterhalter, E., North, A., Arnot, M., Lloyd, C., Moletsane, L., Murphy-Graham, E., Parkes, J. and Saito, M. (2014) 'Interventions to enhance girls' education and gender equality'. Education rigorous literature review. London: UK Department for International Development
- Wang, C. and Burris, M. A. (1997) 'Photovoice: concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment' *Health Education and Behavior* 24(3): 369-387

About ALIGN

ALIGN is a four-year project aimed at establishing a digital platform for the Community of Practice (CoP) centred on gendered norms affecting adolescents and young adults. Project ALIGN seeks to advance understanding and challenge and change harmful gender norms by connecting a global community of researchers and thought leaders committed to gender justice and equality for adolescents and young adults. Through the sharing of information and the facilitation of mutual learning, ALIGN aims to ensure knowledge on norm change contributes to sustainable gender justice.

ALIGN's Research Fund

ALIGN's Research Fund supports small-scale action research or research translation projects which advance knowledge and evidence on gender norms across a wide range of contexts.

ALIGN Programme Office

Overseas Development Institute
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom
Email: align@odi.org.uk
Web: www.alignplatform.org

Disclaimer

This document is an output of Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms (ALIGN). The views expressed and information contained within are not necessarily those of or endorsed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which accepts no responsibility for such views or information or for any reliance placed on them.

Copyright

© ALIGN 2019. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution – NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Licence (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

Research conducted by

VISIONARIA
network

Visionaria Network is a U.S. 501(c)3 organization that partners with local education ministries and sustainable development leaders to design new and engaging leadership opportunities for students in Peru and around the world. Building upon expertise in various international development fields and agency-based empowerment training methods, Visionaria Network seeks to activate local visions for personal and sustainable community development. <https://sites.google.com/visionarianetwork.org/projectingfutures>

ALIGN is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and is led by the Overseas Development Institute.