

Sara De Meyer

GEAS Ghent Site Field Coordinator

International Center for Reproductive Health at Ghent University, Belgium

Major findings

The first global study to demonstrate that we can measure gender norms around the world among this young age group (ages 10-14 years old).

There are consistent forms of patriarchy around the world:

- Girls are perceived as vulnerable and in need of protection in order to preserve their sexual and reproductive health
 - Girls' mobility and social space is greatly reduced and often enforced by parents for the sake of reputation
- Boys are perceived as strong and not in need of protection
 - Boys' social space expands and they are given much more freedom and independence, but face increased risks related to the environment

Implications of findings

Gender inequitable norms are linked with poor health outcomes

- Norms are consolidated early and messages are coming from multiple channels

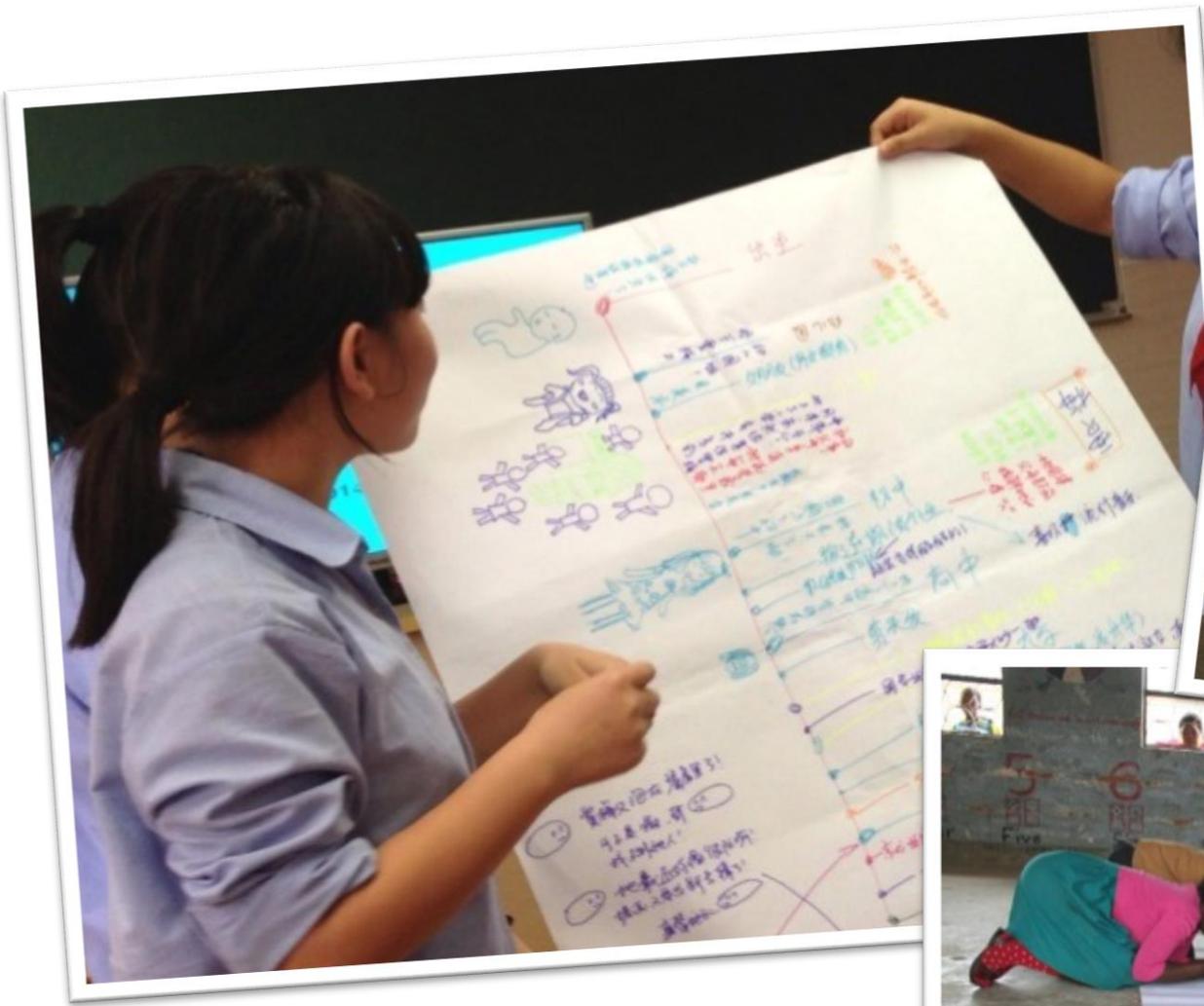
Earlier interventions including boys and girls may be a promising strategy to prevent negative health outcomes

- That incorporate multiple sectors that transmit these norms to our children around the world

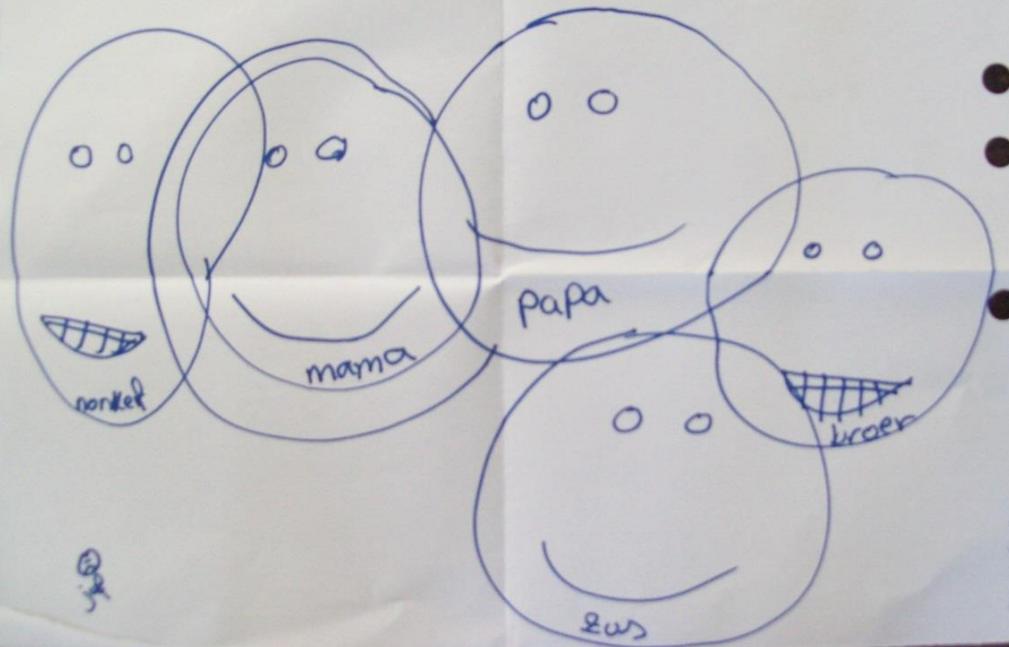
METHODS

Adolescents aged 10-14 years are good and clever observers!

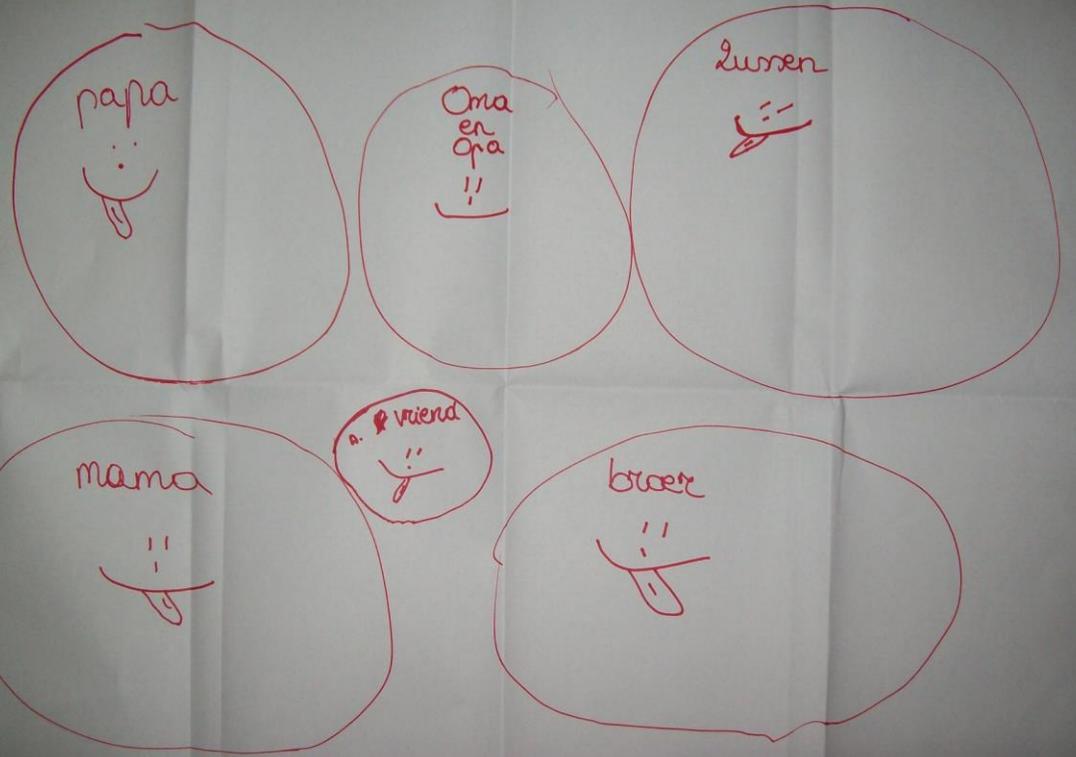
- Employed two participatory research methods:
 - **Timeline** – to understand how transitions to adolescence may differ between boys and girls (groups)
 - **Venn Diagram** – to understand key relationships (individual)
- **In-depth interviews** among adolescents and their parent/guardians
 - **Interview sample across 10 sites included:**
 - 167 adolescent girls aged 10-14
 - 160 adolescent boys aged 10-14
 - 231 female caregivers
 - 56 male caregivers
 - All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim
 - Transcripts were translated into English for analysis for every site except Baltimore



GHE_AD-F-18



GHE_AD-M-21



Sexual development among girls is viewed as risky

Well, [when my body changed], I had to be more responsible for my body because different people – I know what they are capable of. My mom taught me, like raping and all that stuff, so I have to be careful and cautious when I am around like – if I am outside or anything. Because this world is cruel, and you never know what will happen.

-Adolescent female, Baltimore

Friendships with boys should change...

To be a girl, you shouldn't be seen roaming around in the company of the boys in the community because you never know what they are planning for you.

-Adolescent female, Nairobi

A bad girl (with a bad reputation) is one that goes to talk to boys, stands with boys, or calls a boy on the phone.

-Parent, Assiut

Girls stay home; boys roam

Now, I look at myself in the mirror. I say to myself,
“Yeah, I’ve grown. I can’t go out anymore.”

-Adolescent female, Assiut

Eh, boys, they can stay up late, I mean, stay outside and they can see friends a lot and so on. But girls, they have to, I mean, they either have to stay at home, ..., or sometimes they can walk around with girlfriends during the day or have parties at their girlfriends’ place or ... But like really staying up late outside and all that, no. That’s mostly for boys.

-Adolescent male, Ghent

Parents are enforcers

I would also stop her and tell her she might get cancer because of having a boyfriend and the moment you sleep with that boyfriend, it will enter your womb, cut it into pieces and then you die. That is how I usually scare them off.

-Parent of a female adolescent, Nairobi

Girls who challenge gender norms are more accepted than boys who challenge gender norms

Girls can wear both skirts and pants, but boys can only wear pants.

-Adolescent male, Shanghai

Boys who are not like boys will be laughed at by other boys, be despised or talked about, or be called names like gay or faggot (*Baltimore; Ghent*), or sissy or weirdo (*Shanghai*).

CONCLUSIONS

1. This study demonstrates that it is possible to conduct research among this population across multiple cultural settings.
 - ✓ Rich data from both parents and adolescents across 15 sites
 - ✓ Robust findings from the Global South
2. The data is part of and informs a collection of tools and measures that can be used everywhere.
3. Findings support intervening at a much earlier age.