



**Real Choices,
Real Lives**

Out of Time: The Gendered Care Divide and its Impact on Girls

Technical Report





Until we are all equal

About Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organization that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We believe in the power and potential of every child but know this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion, and discrimination. And it is girls who are most affected.

Working together with children, young people, supporters, and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges girls and vulnerable children face. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood and we enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national, and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge. For over 85 years, we have rallied other determined optimists to transform the lives of all children in more than 80 countries.

We won't stop until we are all equal.

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Table of Contents



Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Acronyms & Abbreviations	iv
Executive Summary	v
1. Introduction	1
1.1 About <i>Real Choices, Real Lives</i>	2
1.2 Scope and aim of this report	4
2. Literature Review	5
2.1 Unpaid care work: key definitions & debates	5
2.2 Girls' time use globally: what does it look like?	6
2.3 What influences girls' time use?	8
2.4 Impact of unpaid care work on girls	10
2.5 Men's engagement in unpaid care	13
2.6 How should we appropriately value girls' unpaid care work?	13
3. Setting the Scene	16
3.1 Africa	16
3.2 Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)	17
3.3 Southeast Asia	17
4. Methodology	19
4.1 Research Design	19
4.2 Research Methods	20
4.3 Ethical Commitments	23
4.4 Limitations	24
5. Findings	25
5.1 How are the cohort girls spending their time?	25
5.2 What motivates and influences the girls' time use?	36
5.3 What is the impact of girls' time use?	50
5.4 Girls aspirations: time use, agency and decision-making	62
6. Conclusion	68
7. Recommendations	70
Annexes	70
Endnotes	84

Acronyms & Abbreviations



ACCR	African Charter on Children's Rights
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEFMU	Child, early and forced marriage and unions
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECD	Early Childhood Development
IDC	Internal displacement camp
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LMIC	Low- and middle-income countries
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Southeast Asia
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
SSI	Semi-structured interview
SOYEE	Skills and Opportunities for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship
TUS	Time use survey

Executive Summary



This year the research undertaken for the *Real Choices, Real Lives* report on girls' time use is based on interviews with a cohort of 92 girls and their caregivers in nine countries around the world, taken together with historical analysis of data collected from the same group of girls over the last 18 years. Through the experiences of girls in their own words, this research provides a snapshot of how girls around the world are splitting their time between their various responsibilities and activities as they navigate the transitions from school to further education and the world of work, and from adolescence to adulthood. Our research explores the drivers and motivators that shape girls' time use – and examines the impact of the gendered care divide on how girls split their time, and on their opportunities, wellbeing and aspirations.

Real Choices, Real Lives is a unique longitudinal and qualitative research study of Plan International that has been tracking the lives of 142 girls in nine countries around the world since their births in 2006 until now, in 2024. The study has conducted annual in-depth interviews with girls and their caregivers in order to understand girls' daily realities, experiences, attitudes, challenges they face, and hopes for the future. **The study aims to understand the root causes of gender inequality, and how girls around the world are socialised into gendered social norms that shape their opportunities, behaviours, and attitudes.** Through *Real Choices, Real Lives* we are afforded the privilege of hearing from girls in their own words; their voices, experiences, and recommendations for change provide unique insight not often gleaned from large-scale quantitative studies and inform Plan International's work around the world.

Around the world, adolescent girls experience many competing demands on their time. As they transition from adolescence to adulthood girls are navigating how to split their time between completing their education and developing skills for the futures, engaging in paid work to further their economic independence, performing unpaid care work in their

homes and communities, investing in hobbies and friendships, participating in community life and developing leadership skills, and finding adequate time for rest and relaxation to support their mental health and wellbeing. Many girls around the world are deeply time-poor – because they are trying to balance so many demands on their time, they lack the ability to allocate sufficient time for important activities forcing them to make difficult trade-offs and sacrifices. This can have profound impacts on their educational and career pathways, their health and wellbeing, and their aspirations for the future. Notably, girls' unpaid care responsibilities take up large portions of their day and can prevent them from engaging in other activities.

Unpaid care work is the time that individuals spend performing tasks in the home, including cooking, cleaning, collecting water and fuel, and caring for others such as children, ill family members or older people – and many more.¹ Motivated by its focus on investments in the development and wellbeing of others,² care work is essential for individual, community and societal wellbeing; it sustains our standard of living and maintains the fabric of relationships within families and communities.³ Unpaid care work is **unpaid because it arises out of these relational and social obligations; it is work because it requires time and energy from those who provide it; and it is care because it serves people and their wellbeing.**⁴ However, pervasive gender norms mean that this work is overwhelmingly performed by girls and women.

From the experiences of the *Real Choices, Real Lives* cohort girls **we learn that they are inducted into gender roles of unpaid care from a young age, and often internalise unequal divisions of labour in their homes as being 'natural' or 'just the way things are'.**

“I do a lot sometimes. Especially when there is no school. I frequently get orders... [I get asked to do] things at the farm. The lifting of rice. Then I get water from here and deliver it to those working in the fields. Or maybe cook food and then deliver it to the farm. When I cook, I also do the laundry. Then, I run when I get ordered on the farm.”

– Jasmine, age 18 (2024), the Philippines

The girls' **unpaid care work is also informed by household composition and poverty**. However, there is a critical intersection between gender norms and these factors. The make-up of a household may dictate the amount of work that must be done in a home, but gender norms construct the expectation that this work will be done by girls and women. Poverty may limit a household's access to time- and labour-saving devices, infrastructure, and services, but gender norms dictate that this additional labour is divided along gendered lines.

“My brother doesn't do the housework because there are so many of us girls in the house”

– Alice, age 17 (2024), Benin

Our research finds that the issue of unpaid care work stems less from the fact that girls perform care work, but from the sheer amount of this work girls must perform due to an unequal gendered division of care labour – and the impact that this inequality has on girls' ability to spend time on other pursuits.

The way that girls split their time has profound implications for the opportunities available to them, and has far-reaching impacts on their health and wellbeing, leisure time, ability to participate in community, and their aspirations for the future. Many of the *Real Choices*, *Real Lives* girls' have experienced **disruptions to their education** due to unpaid care work – some report not having enough time to study and performing poorly on tests, others have missed days or weeks or classes, and a few have abandoned their education altogether.

“I used to have more time but now I have more household responsibilities because my brother and sister aren't living here. I am always late for school as is evident because I had to retake my class.”

– Anti-Yara, age 15 (2021), Togo

Others feel that they **do not have the time they need to develop skills they need for their futures**, such as by taking on apprenticeships; others report being extremely time poor because they juggle a heavy care load alongside their education or work. When they become overstretched, our research suggests that girls are more likely to compensate by spending less time on leisure activities and rest. This is having a **negative impact on their health and wellbeing**, with many girls reporting feeling lonely, isolated and stressed. **A lack of ability to socialise and participate in hobbies** deprives girls of opportunities to build social networks, participate in community life, and develop leadership skills.

“I have enough time to study English and do more housework [...] but I don't have much time to meet my friends... Some of my male relatives do not do any housework and don't study hard too”

– Davy, age 16 (2023), Cambodia

The ways girls spend their time also influences their aspirations. Over the years many of the girls have aspired to careers in care professions (such as nursing or teaching) - this is based on the female role models they have around them and the career paths that appear to be feasible and attainable for women and shaped by the gender norms they grew up with that designate caring work as being associated with women's roles. Some girls exercise their agency in pursuing activities that will further their aspirations – and are making decisions about their time use in order to prioritise their education or spend time building vocational skills. However, our research finds that this must be reinforced by enabling environment that allow girls to make decisions about how they split their time.

“As far as my responsibilities are concerned, everything has changed because I have too many subjects to study to be able to do housework. I don’t do any housework; I do my studies”

– Annabelle, age 16 (2023), Benin

As the *Real Choices, Real Lives* girls - now 17 and 18 years old - navigate their late adolescence transitions from school to the world of work, and from childhood to adulthood, they are optimistic about the future. Through historical analysis, we can see that over the years the girls have observed – and in some cases, begun to challenge – the gendered division of labour in their homes and its impacts. From the experiences shared cohort girls around the world, we learn what they need to support them to exercise their autonomy and agency in making decisions about their time use that allow them to prioritise their interests, education, goals for the future, and wellbeing.

These recommendations include ways that governments, communities, schools and other decision-makers can:

- **Recognise the care work performed by girls and the value of these contributions** to their households and communities;
- Take practical steps to **reduce the amount of care work that girls must perform** through the provision of time- and labour-saving devices, technology and services;
- **Redistribute care work within households and communities** by championing gender transformative education and initiatives that address gendered social norms and promote men and boys’ greater involvement in care;
- And **represent the voices of girls in all levels of decision-making** to ensure that their needs and interests are represented in policy design and implementation.

“I’d like to be a strong, determined person, who doesn’t give up on her dreams, who persists until she gets what she wants.”

– Bianca, age 17 (2024), Brazil

1. Introduction



Around the world, adolescent girls experience many competing demands on their time. As they transition from adolescence to adulthood, girls are navigating how to split their time between completing their education and developing skills for their futures; engaging in paid work to further their economic independence; performing unpaid care work in their homes and communities; maintaining hobbies and friendships; participating in civic life and developing leadership skills; and finding adequate time for rest and relaxation to support their mental health and wellbeing. Many adolescent girls around the world struggle to balance their numerous competing activities and responsibilities, leading to them feel over-stretched, stressed, and needing to make difficult trade-offs and sacrifices in order to prioritise their time use.⁵ This can have profound impacts on their educational and career opportunities, their health and wellbeing, and their aspirations for the future.

This report seeks to address a critical research gap by adopting an intersectional approach and learning from adolescent girls around the world towards understanding girls' experiences of how they are dividing their time across their various activities and responsibilities, what motivates and drives their time use – and how this has changed over the course of childhood and adolescence - and what the impacts are on their lives. Critically, **this report aims to learn what support girls require as they navigate their late adolescence transitions: from childhood to adulthood, and from school to employment; and to be well-prepared to achieve their aspirations and goals.**

Time-use research is used to understand the activities that people are engaged in over a 24-hour period, and the impact that this has on individuals' daily realities, perception of opportunities available to them, life-course transitions, their contributions to family and society, and how they navigate and negotiate norms and power relations.⁶ While this research explores adolescent girls' time use broadly across all of their activities, **we have a distinct focus on unpaid care work given the significant**

impact that this has on the wider picture of girls' time use. Unpaid care work, described in the Executive Summary (above), is the time that individuals spend performing housework, providing direct care for children and others, and doing voluntary work in the community for friends, neighbours or the community at large. Care work is valuable and essential for individuals, communities and societies – however, it is also socially constructed and unequally distributed. Prevailing gender norms in many societies dictate that the majority of care work is shouldered by girls and women. This is intimately linked to broader social norms about women and men's participation in and value to society.⁷

Globally, girls spend 160 million more hours per day on household chores than boys of the same age,⁸ on tasks including cooking or cleaning the house, shopping for the household, fetching water or firewood, washing clothes, and caring for other children in the household.⁹ Longitudinal analysis of *Real Choices, Real Lives* data reveals that children are inducted into gender norms about unpaid care from a very young age – first through observing and imitating their parents' dynamics and division of labour, and later through explicit instruction and direction from their caregivers. Gender norms also intersect with other circumstances to drive girls' unpaid care work; key determinates include household composition,¹⁰ poverty and access to time- and labour-saving infrastructure and services,¹¹ and the level of agency and decision-making autonomy that girls have. Our research finds that girls' care work often goes unrecognised within households and societies; it is minimised or rendered invisible by being framed as 'help,' as training for their futures as wives and mothers, or as the 'natural' role for girls and women.

The gendered division of unpaid care work has serious implications for girls' time use more broadly – it critically influences the amount of time that they have available for other pursuits and shapes and reinforces their beliefs about what roles and pathways are available to them. When girls are

responsible for heavy care workloads, they have less time available to attend school, do their homework and engage in learning opportunities; to develop skills that will support their future economic participation and independence; and to engage in civic activities that support their social empowerment and advance their rights and interests.¹² High levels of care responsibilities also leave girls time-poor¹³ - often leaving girls with less time available for leisure, rest, health and self-care. Finally, the ways that girls' time can also shape their aspirations and the opportunities that they feel are available to them for their futures; this impacts their ability to enact their agency in pursuit of their goals.

Plan International recognises that unpaid care work overwhelmingly affects many aspects of girls' and

women's lives throughout their lifecycle. We believe that unpaid care work must be formally recognised and appropriately valued as work, and investments must be made in infrastructure and public services such as education, healthcare and social protection in order to reduce the level of care work performed by girls and women and promote their empowerment, rights and wellbeing. Plan International believes that social norms change which redistributes the responsibility of unpaid care from girls and women to boys and men is essential to achieve gender equality, and that we must centre the voices of girls and women in conversations about unpaid care work and gendered time use more broadly to ensure that their needs and interests are represented and their recommendations for change are amplified.¹⁴

Box 1: The Sustainable Development Goals and unpaid care work

The importance of recognising and valuing unpaid care is enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), under target 5.4. This target, which falls within the goal of achieving gender equality and empowering all girls and women, outlines the importance of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies – as well as social norms change around the gendered division of labour within households and society – towards reducing and redistributing the unpaid care labour.¹⁵ The inclusion of this target in the Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030, which was adopted in 2015, was a significant step in recognising that the inequitable and gendered distribution of unpaid care work is a major barrier to achieving gender equality.

1.1 About *Real Choices, Real Lives*

Real Choices, Real Lives is a longitudinal and qualitative research study that has been tracking the lives of more than 100 girls in nine countries around the world since their births in 2006. Through annual in-depth interviews with the girls and their caregivers, the study explores the girls' daily realities, attitudes and aspirations for the future. The study aims to document the social, economic, cultural and institutional factors that influence girls' lives and their opportunities. *Real Choices, Real Lives* has a distinct commitment to understanding the root causes of gender inequality, and to exploring how girls' attitudes and behaviours are influenced by their families and communities at different stages of their development. By asking questions about beliefs, values and expectations, the study aims to uncover

how gendered social norms and behaviours are created and sustained or shift over time.

Real Choices, Real Lives is a unique ongoing methodology that can distinctly uncover the gender and social norms that influence girls' time use from their early childhood to their late adolescence. With 18 years' of data on the cohort girls' lives, daily experiences, and the challenges they navigate, *Real Choices, Real Lives* provides insights into the lifecycle of girls with a level of depth that many larger quantitative studies cannot always replicate; it has allowed Plan International to track and monitor girls' different experiences of gender norms across their lifespans, as well as the attitudes and behaviour of the families and communities they are part of. Over the years, *Real Choices, Real Lives* has generated rich and nuanced material about the cohort girls

around the world which has been used applied more broadly to girls across the nine countries at the national level, and even globally.

The *Real Choices, Real Lives* cohort girls are from nine countries, in three regions of the world: Benin, Togo and Uganda in Africa; Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam in Southeast Asia (SEA); and Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and El Salvador in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). All girls

within each of the nine countries were sampled to be from among the poorest households within each country. Over the years, the study has gathered data on a vast array of topics and themes, including education, health (including sexual and reproductive health and rights), hunger, protection and violence, girls' activism and participation in civic spaces, climate change, the ways in which girls are challenging gender norms, and many others.

Figure 1: *Real Choices, Real Lives* Cohort Study Map



This year 92 girls^a participated in annual data collection on the topic of their time use and how they balance their responsibilities, activities, rest and leisure pursuits. By exploring the historical data collected over the girls' lifespans, we gain unique insights into how girls' time use has changed over time as they move through childhood and adolescence, and how gender norms have influenced how they split their time between education, remunerated and unremunerated work, rest and leisure, and unpaid care work. By charting individual girls' lives and experiences over time, *Real Choices, Real Lives* is also uniquely placed to reveal the nuances in how girls negotiate demands and

pressures on their time, enact agency, and form aspirations for their futures.

A unique feature of *Real Choices, Real Lives* is that we are afforded the privilege of hearing from girls in their own words about their daily realities, their experiences, their choices and opportunities, their aspirations for the future, and how they have navigated gender norms throughout their lives. In this report, we hear directly from girls around the world about how they spend their time and what influences this; the impacts of their time use on their education, economic participation, health and wellbeing, and aspirations; and their recommendations for change.

^a Plan International recognises that gender is a multidimensional concept, which influences people's identities and expressions in many ways, and that gender identity goes beyond a binary field of 'female' and 'male'. The participants in this study were assigned female at birth, based on their sex characteristics. For the purposes of this study, 'girls' is used as an umbrella term.

1.2 Scope and aim of this report

Over the years, data collection from the *Real Choices, Real Lives* cohort has indicated that the majority of the girls – all aged 17 and 18 years old – are extremely time-poor. They are splitting their time between their school attendance and homework; paid work to contribute to the family income or support their own expenses; unremunerated work relating to the household income (for example, working on the family farm without pay); and care responsibilities including significant levels of household chores and direct care for young siblings and other family members. Many of these demands on their time – particularly their unpaid care responsibilities – are driven by gendered norms and expectations.

The intention of this report is to provide evidence to inform Plan International's work on gender norms, girls' time use, and the impact of unpaid care responsibilities on girls' educational and employment pathways, opportunities and aspirations. We seek to achieve the following aims:

- Establish how the cohort girls, now 17 and 18 years old, are spending their time – including how they are splitting their time between their various responsibilities and obligations. We aim to understand what the girls and their caregivers think of their time use, as well as to understand how the girls' time use has changed over the course of their childhoods and adolescence.
- Understand what the influences and drivers are of how girls are spending their time, and how

these may have changed over their life courses.

- Explore the impact of girls' time use – and particularly their unpaid care work – on their educational performance and attainment, their ability to engage in skills development and paid work, their health and wellbeing, their capacity to participate in community life and build social networks, and their leisure time.
- Learn about the ways in which girls' time use informs their aspirations for the future and their perceptions of what opportunities are available and achievable.
- Provide information and recommendations on the support that adolescent girls need as they navigate their late adolescent transitions, informed by the experiences and needs of the cohort girls.

While there is a well-established body of research on gender norms and unpaid care work, we advance the evidence base by exploring these topics specifically in relation to adolescent girls, by drawing on 18 years of historical data that allows us to document trends in girls care responsibilities over their lives, and by offering the unique contribution of hearing the views and experiences of girls **in their own words**. This rare access to the voices of girls themselves allows for a far more nuanced picture of the complex ways in which negotiate their time use which cannot be gleaned from large-scale quantitative studies. Using real life examples, this study brings girls' voices to the fore and complements other reports by Plan International and the wider gender equality and girls' rights movement.

2. Literature Review

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) called for regular implementation of time-use surveys to understand the differences in how women and men around the world used their time,¹⁶ - including how they split their time between economic participation, physical activities, health and dietary habits, rest and leisure activities and unpaid care work.¹⁷ As a result of the BPfA, there has been a significant increase in national time-use studies which has contributed to our understanding of gendered time-use and time-poverty around the world.¹⁸

For girls around the world – including the girls in the *Real Choices, Real Lives* cohort – their time is split across a multitude of activities and responsibilities. It is the question of the proportion of time spent across these various activities that is the focus of this research, as well as the impacts of this time split on girls' education, economic participation, health and wellbeing, and aspirations. Critically, the amount of unpaid care work that girls carry can and does have a significant impact on the wider picture of their time use – that is, the more time they spend on unpaid care work, the less time they have available for other pursuits.

2.1 Unpaid care work: key definitions & debates

Unpaid care work^b includes the time that individuals spend performing housework such as cooking, cleaning, collecting water and fuel;¹⁹ caring for other people such as children, ill family members, and older people;²⁰ and voluntary community work for friends, neighbours or the community at large such as working in a community kitchen or providing childcare for neighbours.^{21,22} Unpaid care work includes both direct and indirect activities; direct

activities are those that involve direct care of persons (such as feeding or bathing a child, supervising others), while indirect care includes domestic work that serves an individual's care needs (for example, cooking, cleaning, collecting firewood/water).

While data varies from country to country, studies show that more than three quarters of unpaid care work is performed by women²³ - and women carrying the majority of household care labour whether or not they are also engaged in remunerated work outside the home. This means that women are often working a 'second shift' and tend to do more hours of 'total work' than men.²⁴ This contributes to women's high levels of time poverty which is defined as an inability to allocate sufficient time for rest and leisure forcing individuals to make difficult trade-offs and sacrifices.^{25,26,c,d} Oxfam estimate that when unpaid and paid care work is taken together, globally women do the equivalent of six weeks' a year of full-time work more than men.²⁷

There is a comprehensive body of literature on unpaid care work, exploring its impact on women's economic participation and independence,²⁸ and their physical and mental health and wellbeing.^{29,30} Systematic reviews have also been conducted on time-use surveys to understand trends in unpaid care work around the world^{31,32} and there is a large and ever-growing body of work which explores how care work can be appropriately valued.^{33,34} While much of this literature centres on the experiences of adult women, **an emerging body of literature has begun to focus on girls' unique experiences of unpaid care labour and the distinct impacts of this work on girls' lives.**

^b The terms 'unpaid care work', 'unpaid care', 'domestic work' and 'unpaid care and domestic work' are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature to refer to the services provided within a household or community for its members.

^c There is a great deal of literature on time poverty and its impacts. Some scholars focus on the economic impacts of an individual having a time deficit – restricting their analysis to the impact of time spent away from income-generating activities. Others broaden the definition beyond monetary terms and include the time impact of being unable to allocate time for rest and leisure. These debates are captured in: UN Women (2021) *Measuring Time Use: An Assessment of Issues and Challenges in Conducting Time-Use Surveys with Special Emphasis on Developing Countries*, Mexico City: The Global Centre of Excellence on Gender Statistics and UN Women, pp.34-36. Available at: <https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/Measuring%20time%20use.pdf>. Accessed: 25/06/2024.

^d We recognise that the concept of 'sufficient time' is subjective and is informed by normative social behaviours and attitudes which vary between contexts. It is also shaped by individuals' health and wellbeing needs, capacities, and interests. What may be 'sufficient time' for one person will not necessarily be enough for another.

A significant portion of unpaid care work literature focuses on different conceptual frameworks for understanding the gendered nature of this work,³⁵ with scholars arguing that the organisation of unpaid care work within households and communities is shaped and enforced by gendered social norms that align certain types of work with ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity.’^{36,37} Feminist literature on unpaid care work also explores the intersecting drivers and determinants of this gendered division of care work. These factors include the technology available within the household, the availability and cost of substitutes to undertake the housework, the make-up of families and households, the economies of scale derived from different family arrangements, and the role of income (and control or decision-making power over use of that income) in bargaining out of housework.³⁸ For example, studies have highlighted that hours of unpaid care work – particularly indirect care work such as collecting water and firewood – are significantly higher in rural areas and among poorer households that lack access to basic infrastructure (such as mains-supplied water) and labour-saving devices (such as electricity for refrigeration, which reduces the need for daily food shopping).³⁹

This body of work has placed an emphasis on the ‘burden’ of unpaid care work that leaves girls and women time poor, unable to participate fully in civic, political and social activities of their communities and unable to participate in the paid economy on an equal basis with men, thus contributing to income poverty.⁴⁰ However, some argue that this conception of unpaid care work is reductive, as it focuses solely on the negative aspects of care (the ‘burden’) without appropriate attention paid to the notion of care as a social responsibility,⁴¹ or to the relational aspects of caring and the positive outcomes and benefits for both recipients and providers of care.⁴²

Social care literature, on the other hand, focuses on the wellbeing that care produces.⁴³ It emphasises that care work is essential for individual, community and societal wellbeing.⁴⁴ Scholars argue that this work sustains our standard of living and maintains the fabric of relationships within families and communities.⁴⁵ We can therefore understand that care work is motivational and relational and can produce significant benefits for not only the recipients but those providing the care. The issue of unpaid care work as a ‘burden’ therefore stems less from the nature of the work itself, but from the

amount of this work, and from its *unequal gendered division* – and the impact that this inequality has on girls’ and women’s ability to spend time on other pursuits: education, economic empowerment, civic participation and leadership, and rest and leisure.

Thus, we come to the definition of unpaid care work: it is *unpaid* because it arises out of these relational and social obligations; it is *work* because it requires time and energy from those who provide it; and it is *care* because it serves people and their wellbeing.⁴⁶

2.2 Girls’ time use globally: what does it look like?

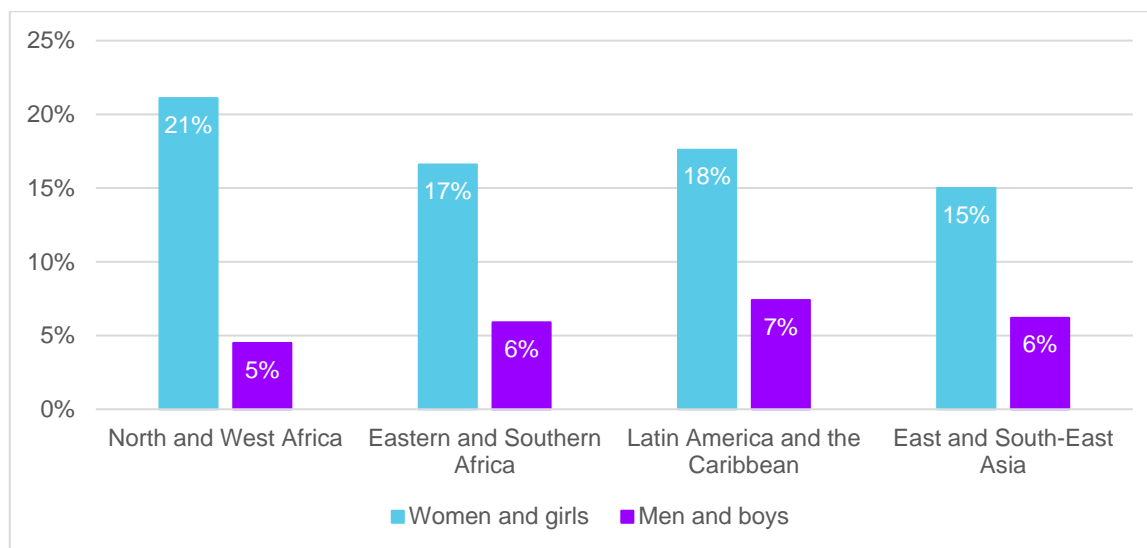
Around the world, girls spend their time on a multitude of responsibilities and activities. They may attend school, do homework and study outside of school hours; and engage in income-generating work to build their skills, contribute to the family business or farm, and develop financial independence. They sleep and perform personal care tasks; socialise, engage in leisure activities, and build social networks; and they participate in their communities and develop leadership capabilities. Girls also spend a significant amount of their time on unpaid care work – which impacts the time that they have available for these other essential activities.

Globally, girls aged 5-14 spend 550 million hours every day on domestic care work, with 14-year-old girls spending an average of 9 hours per week on care responsibilities – however in some regions and countries this number is twice as high.⁴⁷ By the age of 19, girls spend between three and four hours a day on domestic and caring work.⁴⁸ The most common tasks performed by girls include helping with cooking or cleaning the house, shopping for the household, fetching water or firewood, washing clothes, and caring for other children in the household.⁴⁹ Localised studies also highlight contextually specific responsibilities that girls may hold – such as farming-related tasks.⁵⁰ A more recent study found that girls in rural areas have a significantly higher unpaid care workload than those living in urban contexts due to the lack of access to basic infrastructure, time- and labour-saving devices, and non-perishable foods.⁵¹

Research highlights the disparity between the unpaid care work performed by girls and boys. A 2016 UNICEF study found that, globally, girls spend 160 million more hours per day on household chores than boys their age.⁵² In the same year, the Young Lives longitudinal research study found that **girls aged 5-9 years spend 30 per cent more time on**

chores than boys of the same age, which **increases to 50 per cent more time when girls reach 10-14 years**;⁵³ this demonstrates that trends around how unpaid care work is dividing within the home are established from a young age, and become entrenched within family dynamics.

Figure 2: Percentage of time spent on unpaid care work by region and gender (age 15+)



Source: Hanna T. et al (2023)^e

Research has also explored the ways that household tasks are divided between male and female children. Studies have found that girls are more likely to be engaged in care activities in the home, such as cooking, cleaning and childcare,^{54,55} as these are considered to prepare them for the responsibilities they will hold as adolescents and adults.⁵⁶ Boys, on the other hand, are more likely to be tasked with outdoor chores like collecting firewood or herding animals, and their responsibilities in the home are less likely to be framed as training for their future roles.⁵⁷ Studies have also found that boys tend to be relieved of domestic chores as they get older⁵⁸ – and particularly once they are engaged in paid employment – whereas as girls get older their share of household responsibilities increases, regardless

of whether they also have remunerated work outside of the home or not.^{59,60}

Critically, the work that girls perform in the home is often not recognised as care or labour - instead, it tends to be described as ‘help’ or an everyday part of childhood which undermines the value of their contributions.^{61,62} Qualitative interviews conducted as part of *Young Lives*, found that that children themselves did not consider the labour they performed in the home to be ‘work’, and did not consider themselves as ‘carers’ or ‘caregivers’ despite carrying heavy responsibility loads.⁶³ Historical analysis of the *Real Choices, Real Lives* dataset – which will be explored in this report – corroborates research on this topic. Young Lives also found that parents tend to report that their children do less household labour than the children

^e Figure 2 is developed using data from Hanna, T. et al (2023) Forecasting Time Spent in Unpaid Care and Domestic Work – Technical Brief, *Frederick S Pardee Centre for International Futures and UN Women*, p.5. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/technical-brief-forecasting-time-spent-in-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-en.pdf>. Accessed: 09/04/2024.

themselves report. Researchers tend to rely on adults' accounts as these are deemed "more trustworthy";⁶⁴ this therefore has the potential to skew our understanding of children's levels of unpaid care work.^f

2.3 What influences girls' time use?

Key factors that influence girls' time use, and in particular the amount of time that they spend on unpaid care work, include household make-up and demographics; poverty and access to quality infrastructure; and – most significantly – gender norms. "*It's just the way it is*" is often the reason given by the *Real Choices, Real Lives* cohort girls and their families for why girls carry a greater amount of household chores and care responsibilities.⁶⁵ In societies across the world, patriarchal social norms prescribing this care work as a 'woman's domain' and therefore a woman's 'natural' role within a household.⁶⁶ Research suggests that this unequal distribution of care labour is linked to broader social norms about women and men's participation and value in society,

and how these values shape and form social institutions.⁶⁷ The value placed by society on care itself also influences how it is distributed and shared. Because care work occurs in the private sphere it increasingly came to be considered a non-economic activity⁶⁸ and - over time – seen as though it were not work at all.⁶⁹ This has led to a devaluation of care work, which in turn means that it is often passed on to people who are in less powerful positions; in the case of households, care work is often passed on to women and children. Doing this care work can then reinforce individuals being in a less powerful position, by reducing their time and opportunities.

Gender norms around roles for girls and boys (and women and men) are reproduced and reinforced at the household level, with girls taught from a young age that domestic chores are an inevitable part of being a girl. These norms dictate how household responsibilities are assigned and divided between girls and boys, and the rationale that family members use to explain why certain roles and tasks are more closely aligned with ideas of 'femininity' and 'masculinity'.⁷⁰

^f There are various possible explanations for discrepancies in time use reported by children and parents, including social desirability or that parents are simply unaware of the extent of their children's level of care work performed, especially if they are extremely time poor themselves, and if their children (particularly eldest daughters) have been performing this care work for so long that it has become routine and invisible as 'work'. Please see Rost, L. (2020) Measuring children's time use: Insights from mixed-methods research in northern Uganda, *Journal of Time Use Research*, 15(1), p.56. Available at: <https://jtur.iatur.org/home/article/5479295b-8e8e-4164-be8d-ad29df107dc1>., Accessed: 10/04/2024.

Box 2: Gender norms, child marriage and unpaid care work

Child, early and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU) is a significant driver of girls' unpaid care work, with studies suggesting that girls who are married or in a union spend more than twice as much time on unpaid care work than their unmarried peers.⁷¹ CEFMU is deeply embedded in gender inequalities and harmful social norms that devalue and restrict girls' and women's agency and decision-making and preserve patriarchal power structures.⁷² It is also driven – and exacerbated – by poverty, a desire to control girls' and women's sexuality, disasters and humanitarian crises, and weak legislative frameworks. Globally, 1 in 5 girls around the world are married before the age of 18,⁷³ with rates highest in West Africa and Central Africa (39 per cent), in fragile settings (35 per cent) and among girls from the poorest households.⁷⁴ Among the nine *Real Choices, Real Lives* focal countries, three have CEFMU rates greater than 30 per cent (Benin, Dominican Republic and Uganda), a further three have rates greater than 25 per cent (Brazil, El Salvador and Togo), and the remaining three countries have rates higher than 15 per cent.^{75,76}

Entering a marriage or informal union has a profound effect on girls' time use – signalling a pivotal juncture when girls' and boys' trajectories diverge. Girls' caring responsibilities increase dramatically and become increasingly incompatible with education and employment opportunities.⁷⁷ Studies have found that girls who are married or living with a partner spend as many as 8 hours per day on unpaid care work.⁷⁸ Yet while marriage is associated with an increase in unpaid care work for girls and women, it is linked to a decrease in men's unpaid care work.

CEFMU is also associated with higher rates of adolescent pregnancy and early motherhood: married girls are more likely to begin childbearing earlier than their unmarried peers, and to have less time between their pregnancies.⁷⁹ More than 40 per cent of girls in Uganda report having their first child before the age of 18, with more than 20 per cent of girls in Togo and the Dominican Republic reporting the same.⁸⁰ Girls who are mothers become responsible for the direct care of their children – such as feeding and bathing – as well as indirect care associated with routine homework. Girls' care responsibilities are reinforced with every child that they bear,⁸¹ while men's indirect care work (such as time spent on routine housework) actually decreases when a baby is born, regardless of any increases to the amount of housework that needs to be done.⁸²

Gender norms drive both CEFMU and care responsibilities. CEFMU and adolescent pregnancy are more likely to be found in societies with entrenched gender norms, and in societies with entrenched gender norms we are more likely to observe unequal divisions of unpaid care work within households and communities.

Research suggests that the make-up of households is a key factor in determining girls' levels of unpaid care work – particularly birth order and sibling composition (i.e. whether a girl has siblings and, if she does, where she falls in the birth order among them),⁸³ and whether there are family members who are more likely to require care (e.g. young children, older relatives, or ill or disabled family members).⁸⁴ Other demographic factors also play a role in determining girls' care workloads: girls who grow up with parents who have lower levels of education, and whose mother is in full-time paid employment are more likely to have high levels of care work – as they tend to take on responsibilities at a young age to replace their mother's care labour in the home.⁸⁵ The

same is also true for girls growing up in female-headed households where the mother is in full-time employment and the household is not located near extended family,⁸⁶ and for girls born to mothers who had their first child at an early age.⁸⁷

Girls and women living in poverty spend significantly more time on unpaid care work than those in wealthier households. They are less able to afford time- and labour-saving infrastructure such as mains-supplied water, electricity, appliances such as fuel-efficient stoves, washing facilities, and cleaning equipment. Significant time and energy spent on collecting water and fuel is a consequence of poverty – where infrastructure

such as piped-in water does not exist, girls and women engage in compensating labour such as collecting water multiple times per day – sometimes from very distant sources. Access to quality, affordable and socially acceptable childcare is another critical determinate of care labour levels. Evidence suggests that the lack of access to childcare services and paid parental

leave are key hurdles for girls and women to pursue decent work and quality education.^{88,89} Furthermore, in some contexts social norms are a barrier to accessing childcare services when these are available, due to gendered perceptions that direct care of children should not be outsourced.⁹⁰

Box 3: The climate crisis and unpaid care responsibilities

A key driver of girls' care work is shocks and stressors experienced by their household – including the impacts of climate change. Climate change can cause additional direct care work (caring for people injured during extreme weather events, or for those who become ill as a result of malnutrition or climate-related disease outbreaks) and indirect care work relating to agriculture damage and disruption, food and water insecurity, and household livelihood losses.⁹¹ As we explored in the 2023 *Real Choices, Real Lives* report, **Climate Change and Girls' Education**, the impacts of climate change can cause loss of families' livelihoods – especially among communities reliant on agricultural and fisheries which are vulnerable to being destroyed or disrupted by unseasonal or extreme weather events and patterns.⁹² However, the impact of the climate crisis is not gender-neutral.⁹³ These shocks and stressors intersect with gender norms, meaning girls are often required to replace their mothers' care labour in the home when a loss of livelihoods forces the mother to seek alternative (or increased) paid work outside of the home. This risk is particularly high in countries with low levels of social protection, and in multi-generational households where there are young children, ill relatives or older family members that require care.⁹⁴

In 2023, we shared the story of Reyna⁹ - a 16-year-old girl from the Philippines whose father, a farmer, has struggled with the harvest due to increasing extreme and unpredictable weather patterns. As a result of livelihood losses, Reyna's parents have had to take on additional work to compensate, leaving Reyna – as the eldest daughter - responsible for taking care of her young nephews, and doing a significant amount of housework. Reyna said that this left her with limited time to study and socialise, worried about her school performance, and depressed about the number of responsibilities she must carry.⁹⁵ Reyna's increased unpaid care labour can be linked directly to the impacts of climate change – and to the damaging influence of gender roles.

2.4 Impact of unpaid care work on girls

The unequal gendered distribution of unpaid care work among children has profound and detrimental impacts on girls' lives. Not only does it perpetuate gender and economic inequalities, but high and unequal levels of unpaid care work have serious implications for girls' time use more broadly – particularly for their education journeys, including school attendance and their ability to do their homework assignments.⁹⁶ As girls get older, the issue of unpaid care work becomes increasingly important

– with the cohort girls now in late adolescence, and transitioning from secondary education to paid employment and further education and training, their time use has a critical impact on their social, civic, and economic participation.

2.4.1 Education and skills development

Girls who undertake a large amount of unpaid care work have lower rates of schooling than their peers.⁹⁷ Plan International recognises that where girls spend a disproportionate amount of time on unpaid care

⁹ All cohort girls in the study have been assigned pseudonyms; their real names do not appear in this report.

domestic work, this leaves them with less time to study and attend school, affecting their performance and influencing their confidence, aspirations, and future opportunities.⁹⁸ In 2017, *Real Choices, Real Lives* found that girls' "curriculum of chores" was causing them to be late or absent from school, and have difficulty finding the time to complete their homework.⁹⁹ Other studies have found that lateness, absences, and uncompleted homework due to unpaid care responsibilities leads to poor academic performance and grade repetition.^{100,h} School closures during COVID-19 lockdowns were also found to be associated with increased care responsibilities for adolescent girls – patterns which remained in place when schools reopened.¹⁰¹

Heavy care workloads can also undermine girls' confidence and learning aspirations. When girls' unpaid care work causes them to miss school and repeat grades this can lead to even poorer attendance and academic achievement. This in turn can lead to drop-outs as girls lose interest in classes or feel frustrated or embarrassed that they have fallen behind their peers and as their parents start to feel that their daughter's school attendance is futile.¹⁰² This impedes girls' opportunities and ability to acquire new skills, and undermines their chance of building self-confidence necessary to enact their own agency and challenge gender stereotypes.¹⁰³ School absences and drop-outs also impacts girls' future job prospects; lower levels of educational attainment are associated with a transition to vulnerable and informal work.¹⁰⁴ This undermines girls' future earnings and has a strong impact on gendered poverty.¹⁰⁵

2.4.2 Transition to economic participation

The gender gap in unpaid care work is the main reason given by women for why they are not in the labour force¹⁰⁶ - and the foundations for this are laid in adolescence. Unpaid care work determines whether a young woman is able to complete her education and whether she is able to transition into remunerated employment.¹⁰⁷ As a result of unpaid care responsibilities, many women are unable to take on any paid work – with studies indicating that, globally, 42 per cent of women of working age are

outside of the paid labour force due to unpaid care work.¹⁰⁸

Unpaid care work also influences young women's choice of occupations, and limit what type of jobs they can take on. As result of unpaid care pressures on their time, young women are often forced to accept non-standard employment offers at the margins of the formal labour market, or in the informal economy.¹⁰⁹ This is because choosing to, or being obligated to, prioritise unpaid care work requires a level of flexibility – typically requiring women to take on part-time or casual employment to allow them to accommodate their other responsibilities. This has significant implications for women's earning potential over the course of their entire careers, and also represents lost opportunities for skills development and training,¹¹⁰ for building agency and leadership capacities,¹¹¹ and for building a sufficient pension to support their retirement.¹¹² As a result, women are more vulnerable to income poverty, are less able to accumulate wealth, and are more likely to be poorer and more vulnerable in old age.¹¹³

Motherhood increases women's unpaid care workload and decreases their earning potential. In all regions of the world, women with dependent children earned less on average than women without dependents – and less than men with dependents.¹¹⁴ Among women with children, the female economic participation rate drops to 53 per cent, compared to around 61 per cent among women without children.¹¹⁵ While there are a number of factors that contribute to these figures, a significant one is the unequal gendered division of care work that increases for women with every child that she bears.

2.4.3 Health and wellbeing

A high level of unpaid care work leaves girls and women time poor, and unable to meet their basic needs for rest, personal care and leisure. Time poverty makes girls and women less likely to seek medical care, promotes poor nutritional choices and exercise habits, and can impose significant mental stress.¹¹⁶ Time poverty therefore has a deleterious impact on girls' and women's health.^{117,118} Care

^h One study found that girls who spend 28 hours or more per week in domestic and care work were found to spend 25 per cent less time at school than those who perform less than ten hours of unpaid care work per week. Please see: Rose, P. (2021) *Exploring the School to Work Transition for Adolescent Girls*, REAL Centre, University of Cambridge. Available at: <https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/real/publications/School%20to%20Work%20Transition%20for%20Adolescent%20Girls%20Full%20Report.pdf>. Accessed: 20/08/2024.

responsibilities can also pose physical risks – girls who must travel long distances to collect water or firewood can become at heightened risk of violence,¹¹⁹ especially in humanitarian contexts such as internal displacement camps (IDCs).¹²⁰ Girls also report injuries such as cuts from splitting wood or chopping for food preparation, fumes from cooking with firewood, and burns from cooking.¹²¹

Girls' care responsibilities also leave them with less time available for rest and leisure – including play. Enshrined in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC),¹²² Plan International believes that the right to play is essential for children's cognitive development, health and wellbeing, building resilience and relational skills, and exploring the world around them.¹²³ Leisure time is also important for wellbeing and happiness,¹²⁴ and for advancing gender equality. Through play, children are able to explore and challenge traditional gender norms and roles and build self-esteem and self-confidence.

2.4.4 The relationship between time use, aspirations & agency

In childhood and girlhood studies, the concept of 'agency' is understood as children's ability to construct and determine their own social lives, and to exercise their rights to participation and autonomy.¹²⁵ Time poverty results in adolescent girls being less able to participate fully in social and political activities; it can prevent them from entering debates about social policy, standing for decision-making bodies, participating in youth leadership committees, or exercising their right to vote.¹²⁶ This reduces girls' and women's agency and leadership opportunities, and often means that their priorities and views are not represented in institutions that are responsible for shaping economic and political structures, making public policies, and allocating budgets that influence their lives.¹²⁷ Plan International believes that it is vital for girls to have opportunities to strengthen their agency, confidence and leadership skills; this will help them to realise their full potential and reach decision-making levels in both business and politics, ultimately contributing to more gender-equal societies.¹²⁸

Aspirations, agency and girls' time use are intimately connected and have a circular relationship. The way that an individual spends their time can dictate their perception of the options that are available to them

for their future. This determination of what is feasible in turn shapes individuals' aspirations, as people tend only to aspire to things that they consider to be attainable based on their circumstances and resources.¹²⁹ This influences time use, as individuals make choices about the activities that they undertake in pursuit of achieving their goals.¹³⁰ For example, if a girl spends time on vocational training on tailoring, then she may perceive that a future as a tailor is a feasible career option. Because she believes this aspiration is achievable, she prioritises her time building her sewing skills and spends less time on other activities. The more time she invests in building these capacities, the more a career in tailoring is reinforced as an attainable goal – creating a continuous feedback loop. Time poverty can therefore restrict girls' aspirations, as it denies them the opportunity to invest time in pursuit of their goals and limits their perception of what options are available to them.¹³¹

An unequal gendered distribution of chores can reinforce gender norms and socialise girls into believing that domestic duties are the only roles that girls and women are suited for. Studies show that these perceptions of what are considered 'masculine' and 'feminine' career paths are formed at an early age¹³² – meaning that when girls observe unequal divisions of labour in the home and spend a larger portion of their own time on unpaid care responsibilities compared with their brothers, this can lower their self-esteem and narrow their ambitions.¹³³

A lack of peer networks and role models can restrict livelihood choices for girls and create expectations and norms about what roles are appropriate for adolescent girls. Around the world, women make up 67 per cent of the global care workforce – which includes professions such as childcare; nursing, midwifery and other healthcare; care for older persons; and domestic cleaning work.¹³⁴ With these examples around them in society, together with the large share of unpaid care work that the girls perform in their homes, it is possible to see how girls can develop the perception that careers in care professions are more accessible and feasible than other paths. Not only can this limit girls' awareness of the full range of opportunities open to them it can also lead to poorer economic opportunities - because care work is devalued across societies and economies, many of these professions are characterised by low status and pay, poor working

conditions, and high rates of informality and exploitation.¹³⁵

2.5 Men's engagement in unpaid care

Finally, it should be noted that gender norms around unpaid care work harm boys and men as well as girls and women. While care work being prescribed as a 'woman's domain' causes and contributes to the impacts for girls described above, this gendered norm also creates social barriers to men assuming care-giving roles.¹³⁶ A study in Uganda found that gender norms around male identity encouraged men to see unpaid care work as being in conflict with notions of masculinity and traditional male identities, which supports the idea that as boys reach puberty – and thus manhood – gendered social norms dictate that they must abandon care work.¹³⁷ By preventing boys from engaging in household chores, they are not being exposed to valuable lessons about household upkeep and maintenance – but more importantly, they are being denied the opportunity to engage in an inherently relational activity that advances the wellbeing of both the giver and receiver of care. Men who are actively involved in care are more likely to feel satisfied with their lives and have better physical and mental health.^{138,139}

Men's engagement is not only good for women and men – it is also good for children. Higher levels of caring and involvement by fathers is associated with positive outcomes for children include more openness to questioning traditional gender roles, better physical, better physical and mental health, greater ability to build positive relationships with peers, higher self-esteem and life satisfaction, fewer behavioural problems, and lower rates of criminality.¹⁴⁰ By challenging and dismantling gender norms around unpaid care work, we therefore have the opportunity to redistribute some of the workload from girls to boys, thus not only providing girls with the time to engage in other essential activities for their development and welfare, but also providing boys with the opportunity to take on this important relational work, which will have benefits for them and their future children.

2.6 How should we appropriately value girls' unpaid care work?

2.6.1 The benefits of care

Care work is essential for individual, community and societal wellbeing; it benefits the recipient, the provider, and society at large. The care provided by families is one of the most important determinates of early childhood development, and is significantly associated with children's learning skills, educational achievement and quality of life through to adulthood. Scholars have therefore noted that there is a risk that if we view caring work solely through the lens of it being a 'burden', the result will be an overly protectionist approach (rather than a balanced, gender-equal approach) that undermines children's agency.

Scholars point out that the reality is that of the majority of the world's children growing up in low- and middle-income countries are active co-participants in welfare and constructions of family life.¹⁴¹ Article 31 of the African Charter on Children's Rights (ACCR) states that children have responsibilities towards their families and society, and should be required to play a roles within these as part and parcel of being members of their communities and citizens of their countries.¹⁴² This instrument highlights the relational aspect of care, as well as a relationship between rights and duties.¹⁴³ The implication behind the Charter is that household responsibilities are the first building block in children becoming a valuable member of society, contributing to the achievement of social cohesion and national solidarity.¹⁴⁴

While the inclusion of duties in the ACCR has attracted criticism from some scholars, others take the view that the Charter contemplates a form of active participation of children in reproducing positive and cohesive familial and society relations – a way that children express agency.¹⁴⁵ Studies have also explored the ways that children express agency through unpaid care work in order to benefit themselves directly or indirectly. The Young Lives study found that many children reported benefiting from performing domestic work – citing that this freed up their parents or elder siblings to engage in remunerated work (which benefited the whole family),¹⁴⁶ earned them social acceptance and recognition, and provided them with psychological satisfaction – they were proud to be able to make a

useful contribution to the household.¹⁴⁷ Research demonstrates that some children believe their unpaid care responsibilities help them to develop skills for their futures.^{148,149} Findings from the *Real Choices, Real Lives* study corroborate this: our 2023 research, '*Climate Change and Girls' Education*,' found that many girls who had taken on paid work or additional household responsibilities felt that they had learned valuable time management skills as a result.¹⁵⁰ Through this lens we can understand unpaid care work as a site where girls can express agency towards security advantages or competencies for themselves.

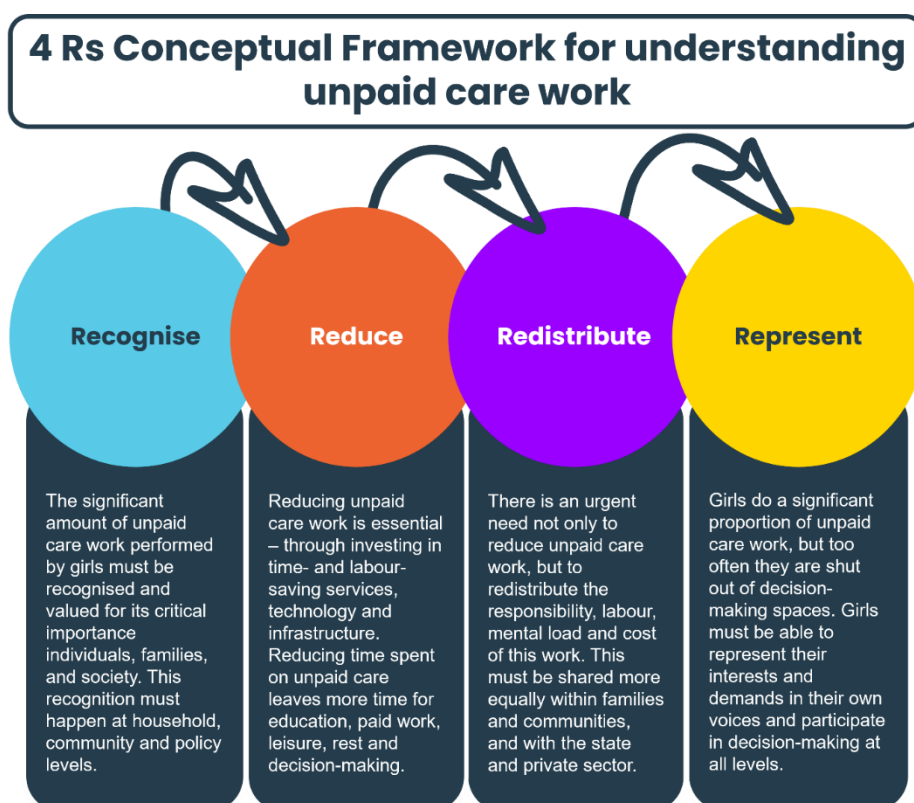
Scholars also note that for many girls around the world who belong to collectivist cultures that emphasise interdependency, kinship systems and collective responsibility, performing unpaid care work is an expression of agency, and of their desire to

contribute to their families, communities and societies.¹⁵¹ It is therefore important that this contribution is recognised and valued; and that a contextual understanding of care, norms and girls' responsibilities informs the ways in which we explore girls' unpaid care work.

2.6.2 The 4 Rs Approach

To address an unequal gendered division of unpaid care work and the impact on girls, we must first appropriately understand and value the unpaid care work that girls perform. The '4 Rs Approach' proposes a framework of four key elements required for valuing care: recognise, reduce, redistribute and represent.ⁱ

Figure 3: 4 Rs Conceptual Framework for understanding unpaid care work



Source: This figure is developed from 'The 4R Framework' developed by Oxfam and ActionAid (Oxfam 2019). It is adapted here to focus on how we can understand and value *girls'* unpaid care work specifically.

ⁱ The 4Rs framework builds on the 3Rs framework (recognise, reduce and redistribute) developed in 2009 by feminist economist Diane Elson. In 2019, Oxfam and ActionAid added a fourth R (represent). A fifth R (reward) has been proposed by the ILO to promote more decent work for caregivers (2022) and is still being debated by feminist economists, while others have suggested the inclusion of other various components. Please see: Elson, D. (2017) Recognise, Reduce and Redistribute Unpaid Care Work: How to Close the Gender Gap, *New Labor Forum*, 26:2; and Oxfam (2019) *Business Briefing on Unpaid Care and Domestic Work*. Available at: <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620764/bp-unpaid-care-domestic-work-business-040619-en.pdf?sequence=3>. Accessed: 15/08/2024.

Recognising girls' unpaid care work means understanding how this work underpins and advances economies and the prosperity of societies.¹⁵² Calculating the number of hours that girls spend on unpaid care – through time use surveys or diaries - makes visible the often-invisible contributions that girls make to their households, societies and economies.¹⁵³ This is an important first step in taking seriously the work of girls and the contributions they make, reprioritising what should be valued and counted, and allowing for an understanding of gendered inequalities of unpaid care work.

Reducing unpaid care work is essential towards freeing up girls' time to be spent on education, paid employment, rest and leisure. This requires an examination of care infrastructure – and recognising and addressing the fact that the world's poorest and most marginalised groups tend to lack access to time- and labour-saving devices and technology.¹⁵⁴ It also calls for an examination of public policy and social services that can reduce care labour – such as childcare services.

This is closely linked to the **redistribution** of unpaid care work – by sharing care work more equally between women and men, within families, and between families, the state and the private sector, the overall level of care work that girls and women perform can be reduced.¹⁵⁵ Strategies for redistributing care work include investing in the care sector – such as childcare, care for older people, and

healthcare services – and implementing (and appropriately funding) redistributive policies aimed at closing the gender care gap, such as shared paid parental leave.¹⁵⁶ Redistributing care responsibilities between women and men within households requires challenging deeply entrenched social norms about gender roles that are often institutionalised in policy and law.¹⁵⁷

The fourth 'R', **represent**, highlights the need to involve girls and women in policy design and implementation to ensure that their interests are considered and addressed.^{158,159} By ensuring that those performing the vast majority of care labour are represented, heard, and have political agency, their voices can inform and shape public policy at all levels that ensures that unpaid care work is recognised, reduced, and more equally redistributed between women and men.

The 4 Rs approach is used as a conceptual framework in this report. Through sharing the cohort girls' stories of unpaid care work and the impacts on their lives, this report aims to make visible the significant contributions that they make to their households and family members – recognising the value of this work. Through the recommendations offered by this report,ⁱ developed based on the experiences shared by the cohort girls, we propose ways in which girls' unpaid care work can be recognised, reduced and redistributed, and ways that we can ensure girls' voices are represented in policy design.

ⁱ Please see Section 7: Recommendations

3. Setting the Scene



Among the *Real Choices, Real Lives* focal countries – Benin, Togo, Uganda, Brazil, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Cambodia, the Philippines and Vietnam – there are different pictures of how girls are spending their time. Where this national level data is available, this provides us with useful context for understanding the experiences of the cohort girls.

3.1 Africa

According to studies from 2023, women in **Benin**, **Togo** and **Uganda** all spend approximately 15 per cent of their day (roughly 3 hours and 35 minutes) on unpaid care – however there are significant differences in the amount of time men spend on these activities. Men in Uganda spend the most time on unpaid care – at nearly 2 hours,¹⁶⁰ with Togolese men not too far behind at approximately 1 hour and 36 minutes per day.¹⁶¹ Men in Benin spend the least amount of time on care labour – it comprises only 1 hour and 28 minutes of their day.¹⁶²

Among girls, a 2015 study in **Benin** found that the time girls spend on household chores increases as they transition from childhood to adolescence, with girls and women aged 15-24 years spending roughly 4 hours per day on domestic activities.¹⁶³ Boys, on the other hand, see their domestic participation decrease as they grow up: boys and men aged 15-24 years spend 52 minutes on household chores, which decreases to only 35 minutes after age 25.¹⁶⁴ Unsurprisingly, therefore, girls in Benin have less time available for education – they have a lower secondary school completion rate than boys (as at 2023)¹⁶⁵ and report having less time for homework (2015).¹⁶⁶ This impacts their employment prospects: as of 2024, more than 23 per cent of female youth aged 15-24 years are not in employment, vocational

training or education, compared with only 11 per cent of male youth.¹⁶⁷

In **Uganda**, girls aged 8-18 years spend an average of 6 hours 42 minutes on care and domestic work per day,^k and a further 2 and a half hours per day on agricultural or income-generating work for their household (as of 2020).¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile boys of the same age spent approximately 5 hours on care labour and 2.8 hours on agricultural/income-generating work.¹⁶⁹ The same study found that girls and women in Uganda spend substantially more time on simultaneous activities than boys and men – that is, doing at least two care activities at the same time¹⁷⁰ – and that there was a marked difference in the gendered division of chores; boys spend more time collecting fuel or water, while girls spend more time on food preparation and childcare.¹⁷¹

Unfortunately, there does not appear to be data collected on girls' unpaid care work in **Togo**, however information about their education rates (as of 2024, more than 47 per cent of girls aged 15-19 are out of school)¹⁷² and economic participation tell an interesting story. Between the ages of 15-24 years, girls in Togo have a higher labour force participation than boys (approximately 69 per cent versus 52 per cent), however by age 25-54, men's labour force participation is greater than women's.¹⁷³ This potentially suggests that men are spending more time in education before entering the workforce, and more women are dropping out of school early to work – before the unpaid care demands of marriage and motherhood require them to spend less time in paid work.

^k This is almost double the amount of time spent on care by women in Uganda, suggesting that girls may be 'deputised' to manage household responsibilities if older women in their households are engaged in paid work outside of the home. However, the statistics on women and girls' time on unpaid care are taken from two different sources with different methodologies, conducted three years apart; this could potentially account for the discrepancy in figures.

3.2 Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

The 2017 survey found that women in **El Salvador** spent around 20 per cent of their day (almost 5 hours) on unpaid care work – notably higher than their male counterparts (7 per cent, or 1 hour and 40 minutes per day).¹⁷⁴ Similar to El Salvador, women in the **Dominican Republic** spend 4 hours and 25 minutes on care labour per day (compared with 1 hour 20 minutes for men).¹⁷⁵ Among the *Real Choices, Real Lives* focal countries in LAC, women in **Brazil** perform the fewest hours of unpaid care work per day (around 3 hours) – yet, interestingly, this does not appear to be because men perform a greater share of the work (averaging 1 hour 40 minutes – the same as El Salvador).¹⁷⁶ Instead, the fewer hours of care work performed by women in Brazil could be explained by greater access to time- and labour-saving devices, services and infrastructure, with Brazil's GDP per capita more than 1.7 times greater than El Salvador's.¹⁷⁷

Data on girls' unpaid care work in LAC is inconsistent and incomplete, making it difficult to make direct comparisons between the three *Real Choices, Real Lives* focal countries in the region. In **El Salvador**, around 85 per cent of girls aged 7-14 years reported being engaged in unpaid household tasks,¹⁷⁸ however care work peaks for girls and young women in El Salvador between the ages of 15 and 24 – according to a 2019 study.¹⁷⁹ In the **Dominican Republic**, more than half of all household labour is performed by girls aged 5-17 years,¹⁸⁰ while in **Brazil** more than a third of girls aged 6-14 reported being responsible for caring for their siblings, and 41 per cent shared that they were responsible for the cooking for their family.¹⁸¹

There is a correlation between this peak of unpaid care work and statistics on reproduction in El Salvador and the Dominican Republic. In **El Salvador**, the adolescent birth rate among girls 15-19 is 69.7 per 1,000 women¹⁸² – one of the highest rates in LAC.¹⁸³ Indeed, a 2023 study found that childcare represents the majority of the caring activities performed by girls aged 15-24 years.¹⁸⁴ The **Dominican Republic** has a similarly high rate of adolescent pregnancy, with a 2022 study reporting that over 58 per cent of mothers in the country had their first child before the age of 20,¹⁸⁵ it also has an extremely high rate of child, early and forced marriages and unions (CEFMU) – the highest

prevalence in LAC, tied with Suriname – with 36 per cent of women aged 20-24 years having been married or in a union before age 18 (as of 2020).¹⁸⁶

There are positive shifts in how care work is understood and valued in these three countries. In 2021, the government in the **Dominican Republic** launched the Communities of Care Programme, which aims to reduce gender disparities in the provision of unpaid care,¹⁸⁷ while in **Brazil** a 2023 presidential decree launched an interministerial enquiry into the social organisation of care in the country.¹⁸⁸ While **El Salvador** does not appear to have launched any similar initiatives or policies, in 2016 the government initiated discussions about the design of a national care policy – suggesting that the issue is on the government's radar.¹⁸⁹

3.3 Southeast Asia

Among the *Real Choices, Real Lives* focal countries, women in the **Philippines** report the second-greatest proportion (after El Salvador) of time spent on unpaid care work (representing 19 per cent of a 24-hour day, or roughly 4.5 hours), and one of the most unequal gendered divisions of labour with men performing less than 1 hour 45 minutes on unpaid care work per day.¹⁹⁰ However, data from the Philippines is not consistent – with a 2022 Oxfam Household Care Survey finding that women were performing care work for up to 13 hours per day, with up to 7 hours of this dedicated to multitasking at least two care activities simultaneously.¹⁹¹ Notably, this survey is not a TUS, and so its methodology and how it categorises 'care activities' may differ somewhat from TUS measures.

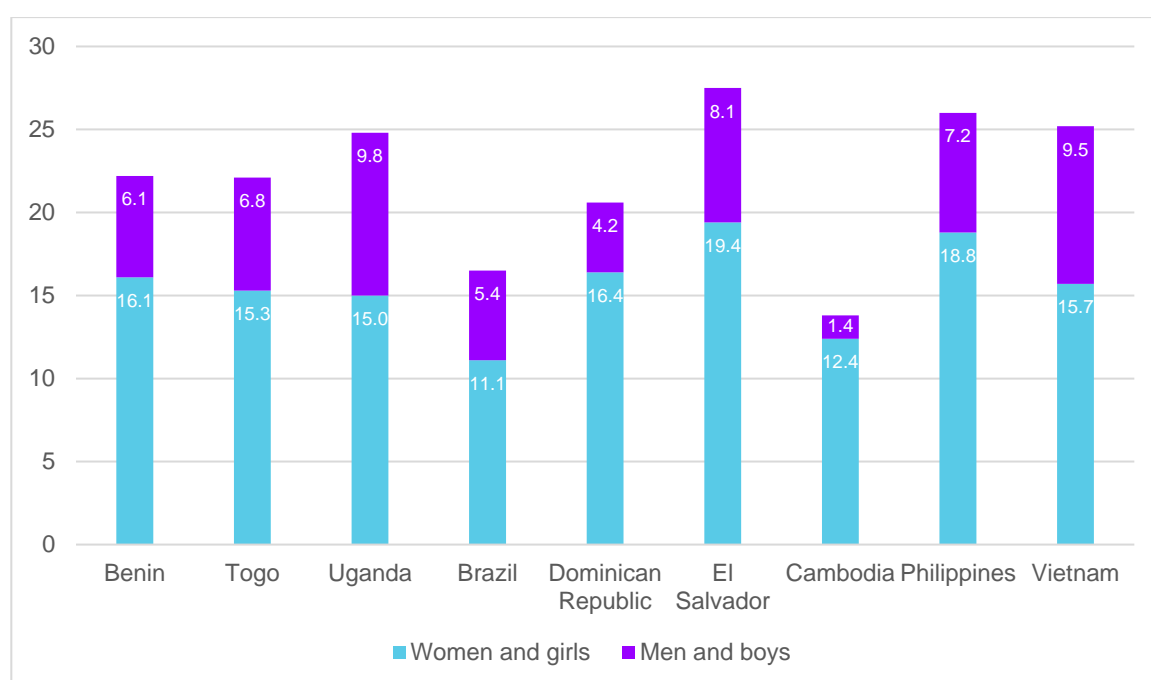
There is also a significant difference in the amount of time spent on unpaid care work in **Cambodia** – while women spend nearly three hours per day on this work, men spend only 20 minutes. Cambodia has one of the greatest gender gaps in unpaid care work in the world,¹⁹² and this is the least amount of time spent on unpaid care by men across the nine *Real Choices, Real Lives* focal countries.¹⁹³ Women in Cambodia also report that the gendered division of unpaid care level is not influenced by employment status: almost 30 per cent of employed women reported that their partners did not provide additional assistance in the home.¹⁹⁴ Comparatively, women and men share unpaid care labour more evenly in **Vietnam**: women perform around 3 hours 45

minutes, men perform around 2 hours 15 minutes. Across the *Real Choices, Real Lives* focal countries, men in Vietnam are second only to men in Uganda in terms of the amount of time they spend on unpaid care work – with Ugandan men doing an additional 5 minutes more per day.^{195,1}

There is limited data available on the unpaid care work specific to girls in the Southeast Asian focal countries. While data is availability on the hours that

girls spend on working and studying in **Vietnam**, and broad statistics on the percentage of girls who report doing care work (87 per cent of girls aged 7-14 years, compared with 82 per cent of boys the same age),¹⁹⁶ more detailed information on the number of hours spent on this work, or the types of tasks being performed, do not appear to be available. Similarly, there is very limited data on girls' unpaid care work in Cambodia and the Philippines.

Figure 4: Time spent on unpaid care activities as a proportion of a 24-hour day, by gender, in *Real Choices, Real Lives* focal countries (age 15+)



Source: Hanna, T. et al (2023)^m

¹ According to a 2023 that compared countries globally.

^m Figure 4 was developed using data from Hanna, T. et al (2023) Forecasting Time Spent in Unpaid Care and Domestic Work – Technical Brief, *Frederick S Pardee Centre for International Futures and UN Women*, pp.15-20. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/technical-brief-forecasting-time-spent-in-unpaid-care-and-domestic-work-en.pdf>. Accessed: 09/04/2024

4. Methodology

This research aims to understand adolescent girls' experiences and perspectives on their time use in their own words.ⁿ We intend to uncover the drivers and influences of how and why girls divide their time among their various responsibilities, obligations and interests; and the impact that these time use patterns are having on their completion of education, their transition to decent paid work of their choosing and/or further education, their health and wellbeing and ability to build social networks and participate in civic and cultural life of their communities, and their aspirations for the future. This research also aims to examine the relationship between girls' agency and their time use; in order to understand potential entry-points for engaging with and supporting girls to make decisions about their time use that allow them to access opportunities, achieve their aspirations, and safeguard their wellbeing.

4.1 Research Design

The core *Real Choices, Real Lives* research methodology is based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with girls and their caregivers, conducted annually to allow for longitudinal analysis. Details about the overall longitudinal methodology of the *Real Choices, Real Lives* research study are available on the [Real Choices, Real Lives webpage](#). In addition to this longitudinal methodology, the study regularly conducts deep-dives into specific themes or topics that have emerged through historical analysis of the dataset – using thematic interview tools. In 2024 we have employed both longitudinal *and* thematic interview tools designed to focus on girls' time use.

4.1.1 Research questions

The questions below aim to explore how the cohort girls are balancing their time between competing demand and priorities; understand the influences and drivers of these demands; and explore the nuanced transition girls' experience from education to employment, and from childhood to adulthood.

1. **Now aged 17 and 18, how are the *Real Choices, Real Lives* girls splitting their time between their various responsibilities and obligations?**
 - a) What responsibilities are obligations are the girls undertaking as part of their regular routines, and how much time do they spend proportionately on these? (e.g. education/training, paid work, entrepreneurship, unpaid care responsibilities both in the household and community)
 - b) How much time do that girls have to spend on rest, self-care and leisure?
2. **What are the influences and drivers that define girls' time use?**
 - a) How have the girls' time use changed over the course of their adolescence (since age 11)?
 - b) What roles do gender and social norms play in the changing responsibilities girls have in their home, school and community?
 - c) What other factors shape girls' time use (e.g. girls' agency and decision-making power within their household)?
 - d) How do girls negotiate conflict in splitting their time across their various demands and obligations?
3. **How does the way that the girls split their time impact their opportunities, wellbeing and aspirations?**
 - a) What opportunities or developed skills are available to girls now at 17-18 years old, that were attained from girls' responsibilities and

ⁿ As the *Real Choices, Real Lives* cohort girls are now 17 and 18 years old, the focus of this research is on the impact of time use on adolescent girls. However, through historical analysis of data collected over the course of the girls' lives we can observe that the foundations for their time use are established early in their childhoods. Therefore, this research report uses the terms 'adolescent girls' and 'girls' with some nuance – when talking about the impacts on girls in the present day, the report refers to 'adolescent girls,' however when talking about patterns established over the girls' lives the report refers to 'girls' more broadly.

obligations over the course of their adolescence?

- b) What is the impact of girls' time use on their wellbeing (i.e. their mental and physical health)?
- c) What support do girls need as they navigate the school-to-employment transition?
- d) How do girls' aspirations and their various demands and obligations inform one another? In what ways are girls preparing themselves to fulfil their education and employment ambitions?

4.2 Research Methods

Research activities for this study are divided into five key phases: scoping and evidence summary; desk review of scholarly and grey literature; historical analysis of *Real Choices*, *Real Lives* dataset; data collection in nine focal countries; and analysis.

4.2.1 Scoping and evidence summary

In late 2023, an evidence summary was created drawing on findings from 2023 *Real Choices*, *Real Lives* data collection (which focused on climate change and girls' education), which highlighted the various obligations and demands that influence the girls' time use – from schoolwork to paid work, unpaid care responsibilities, and other activities. This evidence summary was complemented by a scoping literature review – which explored scholarly and international development research on girls' time use and unpaid care work – and together these pieces informed the development of the research objectives and questions for this study, the development of data collection tools, and the scope and approach for historical analysis of the dataset.

4.2.2 Literature review

A review of scholarly and international development literature was conducted to understand key concepts and debates in girls' time use and unpaid care work research. This literature review^o together with the country contexts^p provide the background and

framework for understanding the global and national pictures of girls' time use, including the drivers and impacts of this time use. The literature review was conducted with key search terms^q and scope of inquiry defined, and using academic digital libraries (including EBSCO and JSTOR), open-source databases and repositories (such as ResearchGate), and international development-specific resources (ReliefWeb, World Bank data).

4.2.3 Historical analysis

This report draws heavily on historical analysis of the 18-year *Real Choices*, *Real Lives* dataset, providing us with unique insights into how gender norms are socialised and internalised over girls' lives, and how their time use as children impacts their situations as adolescents. Across the *Real Choices*, *Real Lives* cohort, each girl's context (individual, household and community) is distinct, and the value of this research lies in being able to (a) understand the gendered drivers and other motivations that shape each individual girl's time use and responsibilities; (b) see how her time use has changed over time as she has journeyed through childhood and adolescence; and (c) take the girls' experiences together to explore and understand trends and patterns within countries, regions, and across the cohort.

The *Real Choices*, *Real Lives* dataset, which is coded and managed using the qualitative software programme NVivo, holds interview transcripts, household inventories and observation data for each cohort girl for every year of the study dating back to 2006. The dataset is organised according to a code list; each year, new data collected is coded and added to the dataset. Data about gendered divisions of household labour has been collected since the beginning of the study, and information about the girls' chores and household responsibilities has been collected since the girls were five (2011). Evidence on the difference in how girls and boys (including the cohort girls' male siblings, schoolmates etc.) spend their time has been collected since the girls were 11 (2017).

Historical analysis of the dataset, and particularly the above-listed groups of data, was conducted

^o Please see Section 2: Literature Review

^p Section 3: Setting the Scene

^q Key search terms for the literature review included 'unpaid care work', 'girls' unpaid care work', 'gender norms and unpaid care', 'time use studies', 'time poverty', 'agency and time use', 'time use and aspirations' and others.

concurrently with the literature review. This involved extracting specific codes from the dataset for analysis, per focal country, per year, and creating evidence summaries that captured key information and trends over individual girls' life courses. Taken together with the findings from 2024 data collection, the historical summaries allow us to understand not only how girls' time use has evolved over time, but also to understand key moments or changes that have influenced girls' time use.

4.2.4 Data collection

In 2024 data collection we used two sets of tools: the longitudinal interview tools, and thematic tools that explored girls' time use in greater depth. All interview tools used were semi-structured interviews (SSIs).

The following seven tools were used for data collection:

- **Girl Interview Tool (Longitudinal):** This SSI tool included questions on a range of topics that have been explored in previous years, including education, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), agency and decision-making, norms and attitudes, and others.
- **Family Interview Tool (Longitudinal):** This SSI tool was used with one parent/caregiver per girl participating in the study. Ideally, the same parent/caregiver is interviewed each year, however in some cases the respondent changes – particularly if a girl has relocated to live with different family members. This tool follows a very similar set of topics to the Girl Interview Tool (Longitudinal).
- **Girl Interview Tool (Time Use):** Developed for 2024 data collection, this SSI tool includes questions about what activities girls spend their time on and who decides how the girls split their time, the girls' feelings and opinions about their time use, and the girls' aspirations for the future.
- **Family Interview Tool (Time Use):** Developed for 2024 data collection, this SSI tool includes questions relating to the parent/caregiver's

perspective on the girl's time use and decision-making. Taken together, the Girl and Family Interview data on time use reveals discrepancies between caregivers' assessment of girls' time use, and the girls' actual time use.

- **Time Use Exercise:** Developed for 2024 data collection, this time-use diary tool was used to capture information about the activities (including simultaneous or concurrent activities) that the cohort girls engage in on an 'average' day. The diary exercise covered a 24-hour period in 60-minute slots, with space for 'primary' and 'simultaneous' activities to be recorded against each hour. The cohort girls were asked to complete during the SSI; in most cases the girls completed the sheet themselves, however in some cases the girls dictated while the interviewer transcribed. The girls were asked to describe the previous day if that day was a typical day in their routine; if yesterday was an unusual day (for instance, if they attended a funeral) then the girls were asked to describe the most recent 'average' day. The recency of the exercise, as well as the detailed timeslots over 24-hours help to minimise recall bias.¹⁹⁷ Figure 5 below is an excerpt of a girls' completed diary exercise, showing how the table was completed, and the categories assigned to activities.^f

A significant advantage of this tool is that it allows for the capturing and analysis of simultaneous activities.^{198,199} The tool also allows for researchers to measure the proportion of time that the respondents spend on different types of activities in relation to one another – for example, comparing how much time the respondent spends on unpaid care work in a 24-hour period versus other activities.²⁰⁰ For *Real Choices, Real Lives*, this tool allows us to understand the proportion of time that the girls spend on each type of activity that they perform - for example, if they spend 20 per cent of their day on educational activities versus 40 per cent on unpaid care work – as well as how many simultaneous tasks they undertake while doing the primary activity (such as capturing the fact that time spent doing homework is also spent supervising younger siblings at the same time). This provides a

^f The full Time Use Tool is included as Annex 2 of this report.

much more complete picture of girls' time use and can highlight cases where girls are particularly time poor.

Historically, there has been a lack of data on children's time use – due to the belief by some researchers that children were unable to self-report on their own time use, or because power relations may make it difficult for adult researchers to understand children's points of view which may inhibit children to express themselves and have their time use properly understood in interviews.²⁰¹ In these cases, researchers often take the word of the parent or caregiver of the child instead – however this can be problematic as parents might not know what their children do, may underestimate the time that children spend on chores and unpaid care work – particularly if they see this not as work but as 'helping' – or may fail to recall simultaneous tasks that children perform.²⁰²

Aside from data-quality issues, Plan International and *Real Choices, Real Lives* also argue that asking children for their perspectives directly is important – it acknowledges their agency and recognises that children are experts about their own lives and experiences.^s

Household Inventory: This tool captures a snapshot of the girls' households, including household composition, employment status and occupation of household members, financial income and expenditures, changes in health, changes in food security, and school attendance of all children in the household.

This information is collected to provide a background context for the experiences and information shared in the girl and caregiver interviews. This tool has been used in the same format since 2018; prior to this, similar questions were asked during the caregiver interview. By collecting information on the same topics each year, we are able to compare and analyse changes over time in the girls' households.

- **Observations:** Observational notes from the interviewers form part of the data for this study. This includes their notes on girls' tone, body language and non-verbal communications (for example, shrugging their shoulders to indicate "I don't know"). The interviewers also note family dynamics that they observe (for example, if there appears to be tension between family members), and information about changes in the home that haven't been captured in the household inventory or interviews (for example, the interviewer might observe that when they visited last year the vegetation around the house was green and lush but this year the environment is dry and arid). This data is used sparingly, recognising the subjective nature of observations.

^s During 2024 data collection the girls' caregivers were asked questions about the girls' time use as part of their interviews in order to explore correlation or disparity in how the girls' and caregivers' perceptions. The full-time use exercise was not given to the parents. Girls completed the time use exercise and were also asked questions reflecting on their feelings about their time use; the data provided by the girls is the core data for this study, with the parent interview questions providing additional context or notable comparison points.

Figure 5: Excerpt of Stephany's (El Salvador) Time Diary 2024¹

Nombre de la niña: Estefany Fecha: 3 Mayo
 ¿Cómo pasa un día normal? Si ayer fue un día normal, piensa en lo que hiciste ayer.

Tiempo	Actividad principal	Código	Actividad secundaria/secundaria	Código
00:00 - 01:00	Dormir	RL		
01:00 - 02:00	Dormir	RL		
02:00 - 03:00	Dormir	RL		
03:00 - 04:00	Dormir	RL		
04:00 - 05:00	Dormir	RL		
05:00 - 06:00	Me levanto me baño sigo de mi cuarto y saludo	RL		
06:00 - 07:00	ago la limpieza y luego busco que aser el desayuno	ch		
07:00 - 08:00	Juego algunos juegos para estar listo para mas al rato ir al trabajo	ch		
08:00 - 09:00	Desayuno	RL		
09:00 - 10:00	Busco que aser si me falta algo a terminar	ch		
10:00 - 11:00	Juego charlamos con mi familia mas tomamos un pequeño descanso	RL		
11:00 - 12:00	Preparamos el desayuno almuerzo con mi familia	ch		

4.2.5 Data Coding and Analysis

All interview transcripts and tools were added to the dataset and coded according to the study's 'Master Code list' which includes all topics and themes explored throughout the course of the study. As the girls have grown up, new topics and thematic areas have emerged – and codes have therefore been added as necessary. Analysis for this report involved a particular focus on codes relating to girls' time use, division of household labour, gender roles within households, girls' time spent on education and paid work, and girls' aspirations; we also utilised NVivo's tool for querying more than one code at once in order to explore relationship between topics (for example, between care work and career aspirations).

4.3 Ethical Commitments

Ethics approval for 2024 data collection for *Real Choices, Real Lives* was provided by the global affairs think tank, ODI, in February 2024; national level ethics approval was received in relevant focal

countries where required. All research activities were undertaken in line with Plan International's ethics and safeguarding policies and procedures²⁰³ - and principles of confidentiality, anonymity, beneficence, justice and informed consent^u guide all data collection for *Real Choices, Real Lives*, both in 2024 and all previous years of the study. As well as keeping to normative ethical commitments, Plan International is committed to ensuring that all research activities are informed by feminist methodologies, which prioritise principles and praxis of do no harm, reflexivity, reciprocity, and centring the voices of girls and marginalised groups.²⁰⁴ How *Real Choices, Real Lives* employs and embeds these principles into the research methodology and activities is detailed on the [Real Choices, Real Lives webpage](#).

Real Choices, Real Lives has multiple layers of safeguarding and child protection in place. In the first instance, interviewers are trained on Plan International's [safeguarding principles and policies](#) and are required to report all safeguarding and child protection concerns immediately.

¹ Stephany completed this exercise in her own writing, and in her own language - Spanish. For the purpose of analysis, we have transcribed and translated her exercise into English. Stephany is not the girl's real name; all girls in the study have been assigned a pseudonym. The document is labelled with a variant of her pseudonym – 'Estefany'.

^u In past years, consent was sought from the girls' caregivers for their participation and the girls were asked for their assent to take part; if a girl declined to participate then her lack of assent would overrule the caregiver's consent – recognising that children have agency which must be respected. In 2024, roughly a third of the cohort girls were 18 years of age at the time of data collection. Therefore, girls who were 18 were asked for their consent and their caregiver was separately asked for their consent for their participation in the family interview only.

Interviewers are accompanied to the girls' hometowns by the Plan International Safeguarding Focal Point for the country office, who ensure that data collection activities adhere to the highest standards of safeguarding and that all concerns are immediately addressed and followed up in accordance with the protocols and laws of the country. Secondly, once interviews are transcribed these are reviewed by *Real Choices, Real Lives* team members in the relevant Country Office and at Plan International Global Hub to screen for child protection issues. Finally, the analysis team that code the data for the study into NVivo fill out a Child Protection Report which is shared with the research teams and Safeguarding Focal Points in the relevant Country Offices to ensure all concerns are identified and followed up.

4.4 Limitations

There are a number of limitations associated with conducting a multi-country longitudinal study that spans three regions and numerous languages. When the study was first designed in 2006, it was intended to complement Plan International's [State of the World's Girls](#) research series rather than be a standalone research project. The methodology for the study has therefore evolved over time and has also been adapted to align with ethical and

safeguarding norms as these have progressed over the last 18 years. There have also been changes in the team members who coordinate data collection and lead on coding and analysis. As a result of these factors, it is important to acknowledge that consistency cannot be assured across 17 years of data collection, coding and analysis – despite the best efforts of the *Real Choices, Real Lives* team. Positionality and subjectivity of the researchers is an ongoing challenge that the study works to mitigate in various ways.

Translation and transcription also present a risk of lost meaning and nuance. Data collection tools are designed in English and translated into the relevant local languages for implementation; then the girls' responses, given in local languages, are then translated into English for the purpose of analysis. Transcribing interviews is also another site where meaning can be lost; transcribing speech is inherently subjective and political, requiring reflexivity on the part of the researcher to be aware of the countless invisible choices they are making when including punctuation, capturing non-verbal expression, and representing the speaker's meaning and emphasis.²⁰⁵ Over 18 years of the study, it is inevitable that this will have influenced the *Real Choices, Real Lives* dataset.

5. Findings



This findings for this report are structured into four parts. In the first, we provide an overview of what the cohort girls' time use looks like. The second section unpacks the 'why' of the cohort girls' time use, analysing the motivations and drivers of the various activities that girls undertake and the amount of time they dedicate to them. From the cohort girls we identified four key influences on their time use: gender norms that dictate girls' unpaid care work, household composition, poverty, and girls' agency to make strategic decisions for their futures. As the girls' experiences reveal, these drivers are often mutually dependent and reinforcing.

The third section details the impacts of girls' time use, revealing that the way that the cohort girls spend their time has direct implications for the amount of time they have available for other pursuits. The fourth and final section explores the relationship between girls' time use, their expressions of agency, and the development of their aspirations for the future. From the girls' experiences we learn that gender norms have a profound influence on not only the way that girls spend their time, but also in the futures that they envisage for themselves.

5.1 How are the cohort girls spending their time?

As the cohort girls, now aged 17 and 18 years old, transition from childhood to adulthood, and from secondary school to higher education and/or economic participation, their time use has radically changed and evolved.

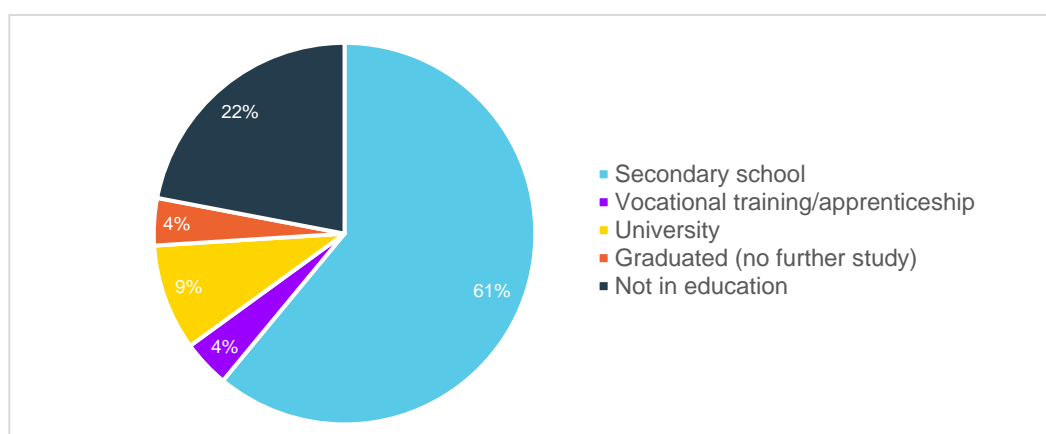
5.1.1 Education

Among the 92 remaining in the cohort, **56 girls are in secondary school** currently completing their education (61 per cent), and a further **12 girls have graduated** (13 per cent). All of the cohort girls in Vietnam who remain in the study are currently in secondary school, while 13 of the 14 cohort girls in the Philippines are still in school. All of the cohort girls in Brazil are either completing secondary education or have already graduated, while in the Dominican Republic six of the remaining 12 girls in the cohort have graduated, and three others are completing their final year of secondary school.

"I study full-time. I study every morning and 6 sessions per week. Besides, I have extra classes. I take extra classes throughout the week [...] maybe every day I have 2 extra lessons, each lasting 1 hour and 20 minutes."

– Yen, age 18 (2024), Vietnam

Figure 6: Cohort girls' education status in 2024 (%)



Across the cohort of 92 girls, eight of the 12 girls who have graduated from secondary school have **transitioned to university or to university bridging courses**. They are studying a diverse range of courses including midwifery, literature, electromechanical engineering, and medicine.

“I'm currently in my first year of midwifery school after obtaining my BAC [...] it was difficult for me at first to live on my own without my parents. But over time I got used to it, because they taught me to live on my own and make decisions on my own.”

– Annabelle, age 17 (2024), Benin

A further four girls in the cohort (all from Africa) left school early to undertake **vocational training programmes or apprenticeships**. These girls are all pursuing fashion and tailoring vocations.

“I enjoy tailoring... I believe that the money I get from it will be able to sustain me”

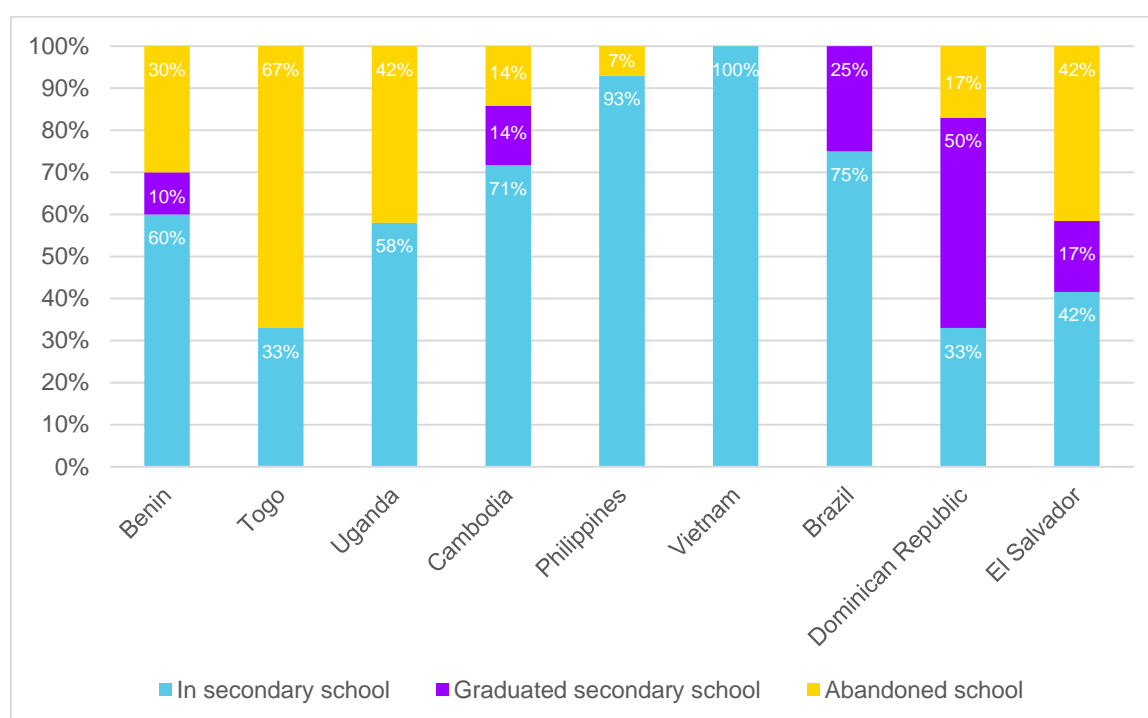
– Namazzi, age 17 (2024), Uganda

Togo and El Salvador have the fewest girls either at school or graduated – only five of nine girls in Togo have continued with their education in any capacity (3 in school, and 2 in vocational education), and five of the 12 girls in El Salvador. The remaining girls from these two countries have dropped out of school and are not pursuing alternative education.

Among the girls in secondary school, **the average time spent on their education per day is around 9 hours per day**. The girls spend a little under 7 hours per day at school, and an additional 2 hours 10 minutes on homework in an average day.^v The girls in Benin spend the greatest number of hours per day on their education: they attend school for over 9 hours per day, then complete nearly 2 hours 20 minutes of homework on top of this. The cohort girls in Uganda, Togo and Vietnam also spend 10 hours or more on their education, while girls in Brazil spend the least amount of time – roughly 5 hours at school, and less than an hour on homework.

^v A note on girl's time use, as reported in hours: as mentioned in Section 4: Methodology, this year the girls were asked to complete a time use diary which captured their daily activities on an 'average' day according to 1-hour blocks. The diary had two columns: main activity/ies, and simultaneous activity/ies. Where a girl listed one activity in an hour block, this is represented throughout this report as her spending 1 hour on this activity; if the same activity is listed in 3-hour blocks then this is reported that she spends 3 hours on this activity. Where multiple activities were listed in the same block, unless otherwise recorded by the girl we have interpreted this as the hour being equally divided between the activities; for example, if two activities were listed then this is reported as 30 minutes having been spent on each. Simultaneous hours are recorded as additional time: for example, if a girl records 24 hours of main activities, and then a further 2 hours of simultaneous activities (e.g. supervising a child while doing laundry), then 26 hours of activities are recorded. Because of this method of calculating girls' time use, there may be cases in this report where a girl's reported time use appears to add up to more than 24 hours in a day; this is by design and demonstrates the considerable multi-tasking and resulting time-poverty experienced by many of the girls.

Figure 7: Secondary school enrolment, completion and abandonment by focal country (%)



“I am more strict with myself and work harder so that if I cannot go to university, I can still pass graduation high school”

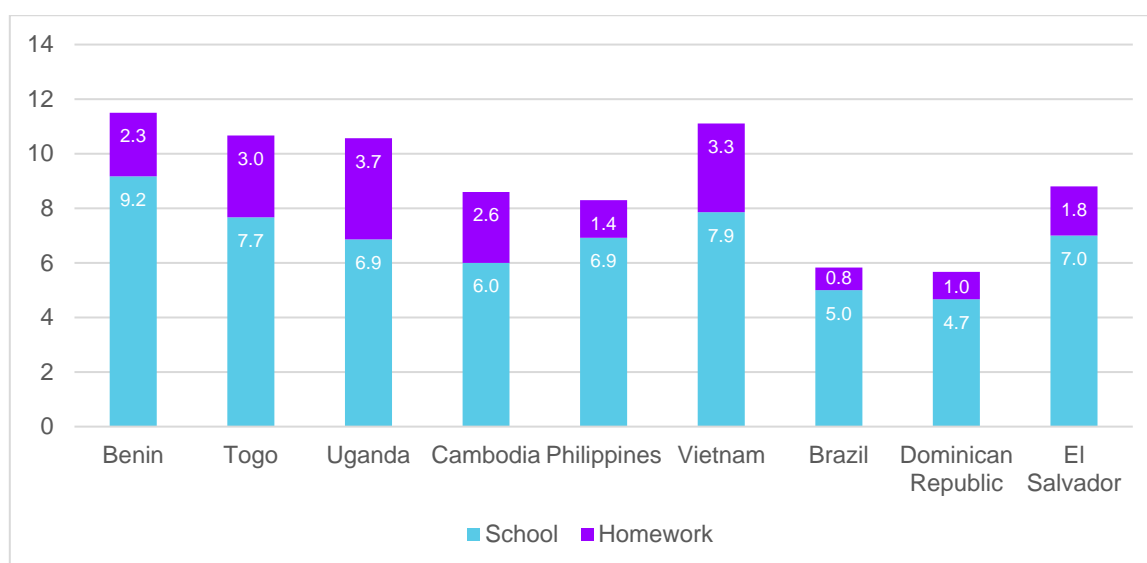
– Ly, age 18 (2024) Vietnam

Among the girls who are spending significant hours on their education, many explain that they need to make trade-offs in other areas of their lives in order to prioritise their studies. This is explored further in Section 5.3.

“I socialise less and concentrate on my books more... at times [it is] hectic, but I feel like I am now used to it.”

- Justine, age 17 (2024), Uganda

Figure 8: Hours spent by cohort girls on school and homework per day, in 2024



5.1.2 Remunerated and unremunerated work

28 girls in the cohort are engaged in remunerated work – 11 girls work fulltime, while 17 girls balance paid work with their studies at school or university. Remunerated work includes activities that the girls are financially compensated for undertaking, whether as part of the formal or informal economy. The average time spent by the girls on paid work is 5 hours 12 minutes per day; girls who are in education (either school or in further studies) tend to work an average of two and a half hours per day, while girls who are not balancing work with studies do around 7 hours of paid work per day. For the most part, the girls' jobs include retail (as shop assistants or working at market stalls), farm work including harvesting and digging, hospitality (as kitchen assistants and waitresses) and working in a family member's business. Notably, Natalia, in Brazil, is paid to care of her grandmother for 3 hours each day before school (which she now attends part time). Natalia's grandmother pays her for this work, and Natalia says that she likes this work, *"because most of the time I like helping my grandmother and being around her [...] and I also like [doing it] to pay my bills [...] and to buy other things I need"*. Natalia is the only girl in the cohort who is engaged in paid care work.

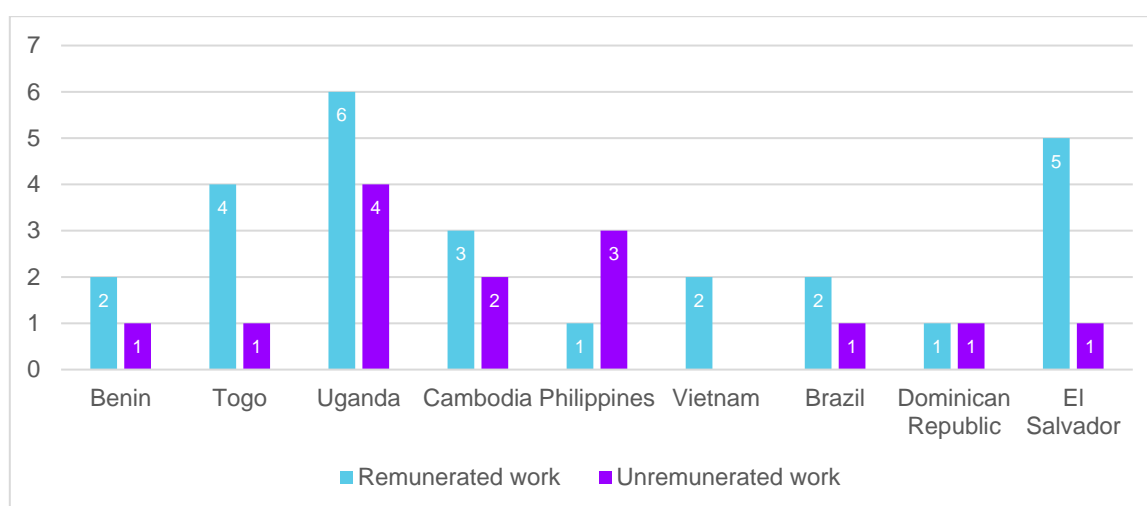
14 girls are engaged in unremunerated work. In this report, we distinguish 'unremunerated work' from 'unpaid care work.' Unremunerated work is work that the girls are not financially compensated for and does not involve direct or indirect care of persons. For the cohort girls, unremunerated work primarily takes the form of contributing to a family business - for example, selling at a market stall or working on the family farm. While the girls aren't paid for this work they may be compensated in other ways, for example, with goodwill, favours, or in exchange for room and board.

Four of the girls do unremunerated work alongside their secondary school studies, Rebeca (Dominican Republic) balances her university studies with helping her mother with her market stall, and Namazzi (Uganda) does 5 hours per day of work on her family's farm alongside her tailoring apprenticeship. Beti (Uganda) does 7 hours of unremunerated gardening and farmwork per day as she is temporarily not attending school due to an inability to pay the fees; however, she hopes to return to school soon. For four girls in the cohort – unremunerated work is their main activity, alongside unpaid care activities. Margaret (Benin) does 12 hours of unremunerated work per day to help her family; however, she wishes she could be doing an apprenticeship in dressmaking.

“I didn’t do any work that made me any money myself - I just helped my aunt sell her cosmetics... I go out two or three times every five days from 7am to midday to sell the cosmetics. I also go to the field and do the weeding with my aunt and cousin.”

– Margaret, age 18 (2024), Benin

Figure 9: Number of cohort girls engaged in remunerated and unremunerated work in 2024, per country



5.1.3 Unpaid care work

95 per cent of the cohort report doing unpaid care work as part of their usual daily activities; the average time they spent on this work is around 5 hours 15 minutes per day – more than double the average time allocated for homework among the cohort girls. Comparing this against global averages^w we can see that the ***Real Choices, Real Lives* girls have a higher average care load than their peers around the world**. Indeed, the cohort girls spend slightly more time on care work, on average, than the number of hours spent by adult women globally (4 hours 18 minutes).²⁰⁶

There are 7 girls in the *Real Choices, Real Lives* cohort who are now mothers. These girls perform an average of 13 and a half hours of care work per day – including both direct and indirect care activities, often performed simultaneously. Girls who are mothers spent an average of 8 hours 10 minutes on direct care work – among these tasks are feeding their children (including

breastfeeding), bathing and changing babies, and supervising and playing with children. This is far greater than girls who are not mothers – who spend an average of 2 and a half hours per day on direct care – usually for younger siblings or other young family members. Girls who are mothers also spend more time on indirect care activities – over 5 and a half hours per day (often conducted simultaneously with direct care tasks – such as cooking while also supervising a child) compared with an average of 4 hours for girls who are not mothers.

“Now the child is a bit older, now he asks me for anything, I have to bathe him and be on time to change him when, when he gets wet [...] I have to change him so that he doesn’t get sick, ok? I have to wash his clothes, all the little things like that.”

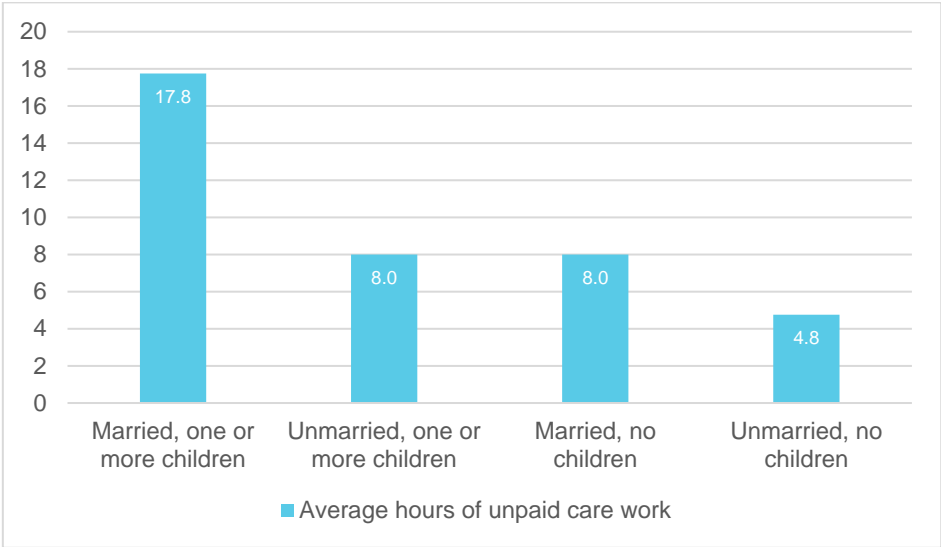
- Hillary, age 17 (2024) El Salvador

^w Explored in Section 2.2

Shockingly, the care load for the cohort girls who are married or in a union and have one or more children is nearly 1.5 times that of girls who are single mothers (around 14 and a half hours), and the amount of care work performed by single mothers is the same as married girls with no dependents (8 hours each).^x The fact that care work

is higher for partnered mothers than single mothers could perhaps suggest that single mothers in the cohort may receive unpaid care support from others in their family and networks (such as mothers, sisters), while partnered girls don't receive similar support from their spouses – however there may be other factors at play that were not uncovered by our data collection.

Figure 10: Time spent on unpaid care work according to marital and parental status (average hours per day)^y



Among girls in the cohort who are not mothers, most of the unpaid care work performed is indirect care work – and they spend an average of 4 hours per day on this work. These tasks vary from country to country, but predominantly involve cooking, cleaning dishes, collecting water and/or firewood, sweeping, and doing laundry. 35 girls are involved in both direct and indirect care work and spend an average of 2 and a half hours per day on direct care work in addition to their time spent on indirect care activities. Fezire, in Togo, does around 12 hours of chores and indirect care work per day.^z She collects water, prepares and serves meals to her family, cleans the kitchen, and helps her mother with errands. Fezire

says that her care work dramatically increased when she dropped out of school:

“Before, when I went to school, there were certain things I didn’t do. Now that I’m no longer going to school, I do everything.”

– Fezire, age 18 (2024), Togo

Leyla, in the Dominican Republic, is pregnant and lives with her husband. She dropped out of school several months ago and is not working, and now provides care for her younger brothers (ages 7 and 5) while her mother spends Monday to Friday in the

^x A 2020 study also found that married mothers with male partners do more housework than single mothers; it also found that married mothers reported less time spent on rest and leisure activities. This research focussed only on adult women in USA, however; it does not appear that similar studies have been done with adolescent mothers. Please see: Pepin, J.R. (2018) Marital Status and Mothers' Time Use: Childcare, Housework, Leisure and Sleep, *Demography*, 55:1, pp. 107-133. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6560646/>. Accessed: 20/08/2024.

^y Simultaneous care activities are counted twice. For example, a married mother might perform 12 hours of direct care work, and during this same period do 5 hours of chores and household tasks giving a total of 17 hours of unpaid care work.

^z Fezire's chores are often conducted simultaneously.

city working, returning home only on weekends. Leyla describes an average day caring for her brothers:

“I get up at 7 o’clock in the morning, send them to school, then they come back at twelve o’clock, back to work again [...] I make breakfast for the boys, do the washing up, clean the patio, clean the house when it’s dirty, and then get cooking for when they come home.”

– Leyla, age 18 (2024), Dominican Republic

It should be noted that Leyla’s father lives with her brothers, but he leaves for work “very early” in the morning, and it doesn’t appear to contribute to household chores. Here we start to see some of the gendered drivers of girls’ time use – and particularly what influences their levels of unpaid care work. This will be explored in more detail in Section 5.2.

Across the cohort, the girls who are still in school report doing an average of 4 hours 15 minutes on unpaid care work. Both Anti-Yara and Reine (Togo) said that all of their time spent not at school or studying is spent doing unpaid care work – aside from their time spent sleeping. Reine supervises her siblings and cares for her grandfather while also cooking and serving food for the family, and in the morning, she collects water and sweeps the courtyard before school. Reyna, in the Philippines, has moved in with her sister’s family in a different

barangay^{aa} to be closer to her school. Her sister has four children, and another nephew has come to stay in the household and Reyna reports spending all of her time outside of school taking care of her five nephews – aged between 2 and 10 years. While Reyna does report doing an hour of homework in the evenings, this time is spent simultaneously supervising her nephews and helping them with their homework. Of her busy schedule, Reyna says:

“It’s tiring because I’m busy at school, and when I get home, I cook and take care of my sister’s children. My sister is busy because she is a teacher.”

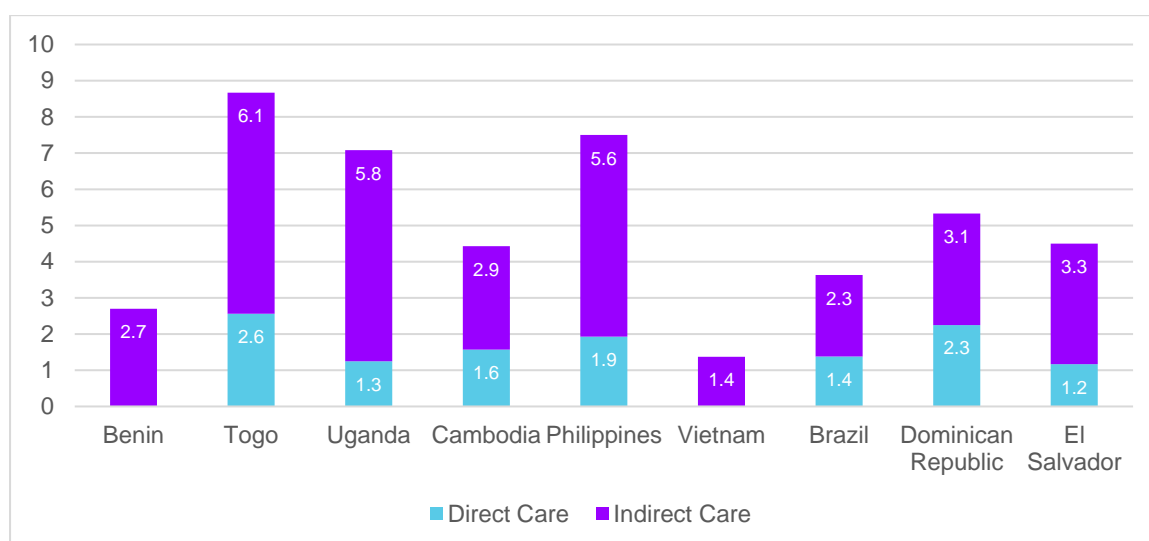
– Reyna, age 17 (2024), the Philippines

Comparing the cohort girls against national averages we can see that, for the most part, they are performing a greater number of hours of unpaid care work than the country-wide averages for girls (Uganda) and women (Dominican Republic, Brazil, Philippines, Cambodia and Vietnam) in their countries.^{bb} The greatest differences are seen in the Philippines and Cambodia, where the national averages for time spent on unpaid work by women are 4 and a half and 3 hours respectively, while for the cohort girls this is 7 and a half and 4 and a half hours respectively. It is only in Benin and Vietnam where the cohort girls perform fewer hours of care work than the national averages for girls and young women (Benin) and women aged 18 years and over (Vietnam).

^{aa} Filipino term for local administrative area – similar to a district or ward.

^{bb} As per Section 3, national averages for the cohort countries are not directly comparable. The national averages available were for the following age groups: 15-24 years (Benin), 8-18 years (Uganda), women aged 18+ (El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Philippines, Cambodia and Vietnam) and there was no data available for Togo.

Figure 11: Average daily hours spent on direct and indirect care activities per focal country (all girls)



5.1.4 Rest and leisure

The majority of the cohort girls – 80 out of 92 – say that they have **enough time for at least one hour of leisure activities per day**. Rest and leisure activities are essential for wellbeing, children's development, and girls' ability to develop agency and leadership capabilities. Leisure activities described by the cohort girls include socialising with friends and family, scrolling social media on their phones, playing sports, or watching television. The average amount of time spent on leisure activities by the girls is 3 and a half hours per day. The girls in Brazil have the most time for leisure activities – they report spending up to 8 hours per day on leisure activities, although this tends to be among the girls who have graduated or attend school part time. Sofia likes to spend time with her church youth group, while Natalia enjoys experimenting with dessert recipes.

Girls in Togo report having the least amount of time for leisure activities, with an average of an hour and 45 minutes per day. Folami spends her leisure time napping during the afternoon after lunch, while Azia likes to chat online with her friends for an hour in the evening. Three of the nine cohort girls in Togo report having no time for leisure activities, and one of these girls – Reine – additionally reports only having 4 hours of sleep per night. Reine attributes this lack of

rest to the amount of homework that she has; she studies late into the night after she has finished her chores and supervising her younger brothers.

The cohort girls get an average of 7 hours 24 minutes of sleep per night. Public health recommendations on sleep duration state that teenagers (14-17 years) should get 8-10 hours of sleep per night, and young adults (18-25 years) should get 7-9 hours.²⁰⁷ As the cohort girls are 17 and 18 years old, a 'good' amount of sleep would be in the range of 7-10 hours per nights. **Worryingly, 33 per cent of the girls get fewer than 7 hours sleep per night, and 14 per cent get 5 hours or fewer.** For Justine (Uganda), Reine (Togo), Quynh and Sen (both Vietnam), the reason for their sleep deficit is staying up late studying, while for Ayomide (Togo) caring for her daughter means that she only gets 5 hours of sleep per night. Studies have highlighted the physical and mental health effects of inadequate sleep – including reduced immunity, high blood pressure, depression, and decreased attention span.²⁰⁸

On the other hand, 16 per cent of the girls reported getting 10 or more hours' sleep during a 24-hour. Data collection in 2024 took place during Ramadan and Lent in some of the cohort countries,^{cc} and so some of the girls reported additional naps during the day as they were fasting. Many of the other girls in

^{cc} Data collection across the nine *Real Choices, Real Lives* focal countries took place between mid-March and the first week of June, however each Plan International Country Office that led on the data collection organised for interviews to take place at times that were mutually convenient for the girls and for the Country Office teams. Therefore, some countries completed data collection by end of March, while others did not conduct data collection until early June.

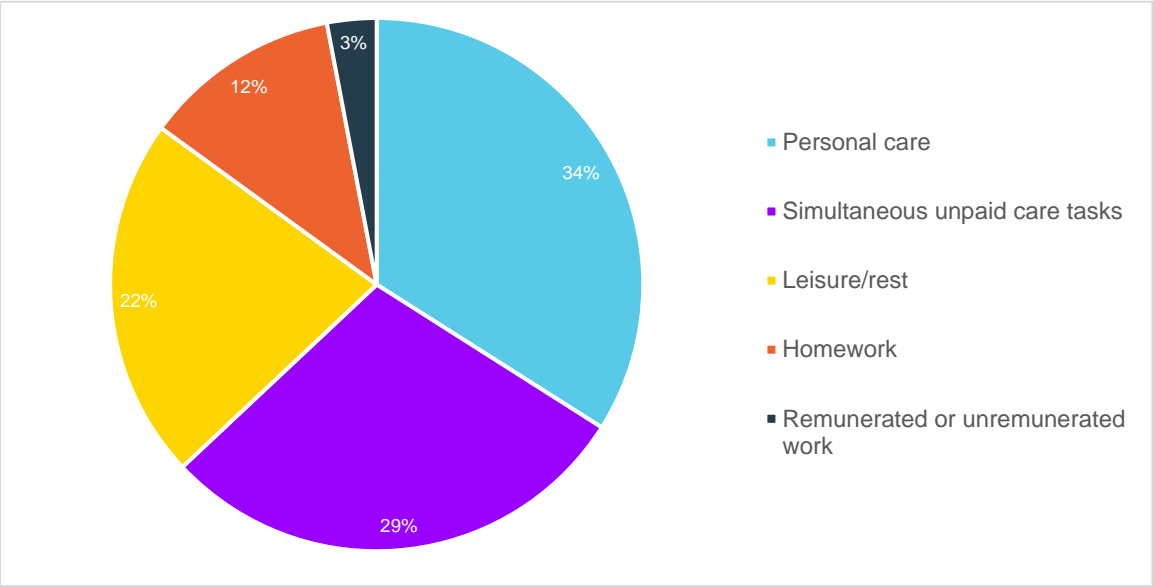
the cohort who report having a good amount of sleep are those at university, or those who have graduated from secondary school.

5.1.5 Multi-tasking

As we can see, the cohort girls are being stretched in a number of different directions. 71 of the girls (77 per cent) report spending at least a portion of their day multi-tasking on one or more activities, for an average of 4 hours 17 minutes per day. **The most common simultaneous activity reported by the**

girls is unpaid care work – usually performed at the same time as personal care (simultaneously feeding themselves and feeding small children, for instance), rest and leisure activities (for example, watching television while sweeping), and homework (for instance, supervising young family members while studying). The girls also report doing multiple care tasks at once – such as cooking while supervising small children. Girls who spend the most amount of time on simultaneous activities are also the girls who spend the most time on unpaid care work, suggesting that care often demands the girls’ time even as they concentrate on other priorities.

Figure 12: Most common activities that are multi-tasked with unpaid care work (%)



For some girls, including Jasmine (Philippines), Ayomide (Togo), and Beti (Uganda), nearly their entire days are spent multitasking chores, childcare, education, paid work, unremunerated work, leisure, and personal care. Jasmine is currently taking a temporary break from school; she reports doing as many as 11 hours of chores per day – often doing simultaneous chores.

“I do a lot sometimes. Especially when there is no school. I frequently get orders... [I get asked to do] things at the farm. The lifting of rice. Then I get water from here and deliver it to those working in the fields. Or maybe cook food and then deliver it to the farm. When I cook, I also do the laundry. Then, I run when I get ordered on the farm.”

– Jasmine, age 18 (2024), the Philippines

When care work is done simultaneously alongside other activities it can become 'invisible'. Five of the eight cohort girls in Brazil specify that their leisure time overlaps with unpaid care work. For example, Bianca graduated recently and is not currently working. She says she is glad to have finished school because now she has more freedom and time for fun, however, much of her leisure time (usually spent messaging or chatting with friends or watching television) overlaps with the time she spends cleaning the house and preparing meals for her family. Bianca is happy to spend her time in this way, she says that she feels good about being able to help her mother out with the chores around the house.

"Last year I was still at school, and I didn't have time to do a lot of things, but now I have time to go out with my friends and do more things here at home [...] Its good to have a little more time to do things I like, like going out, having fun."

– Bianca, age 17 (2024), Brazil

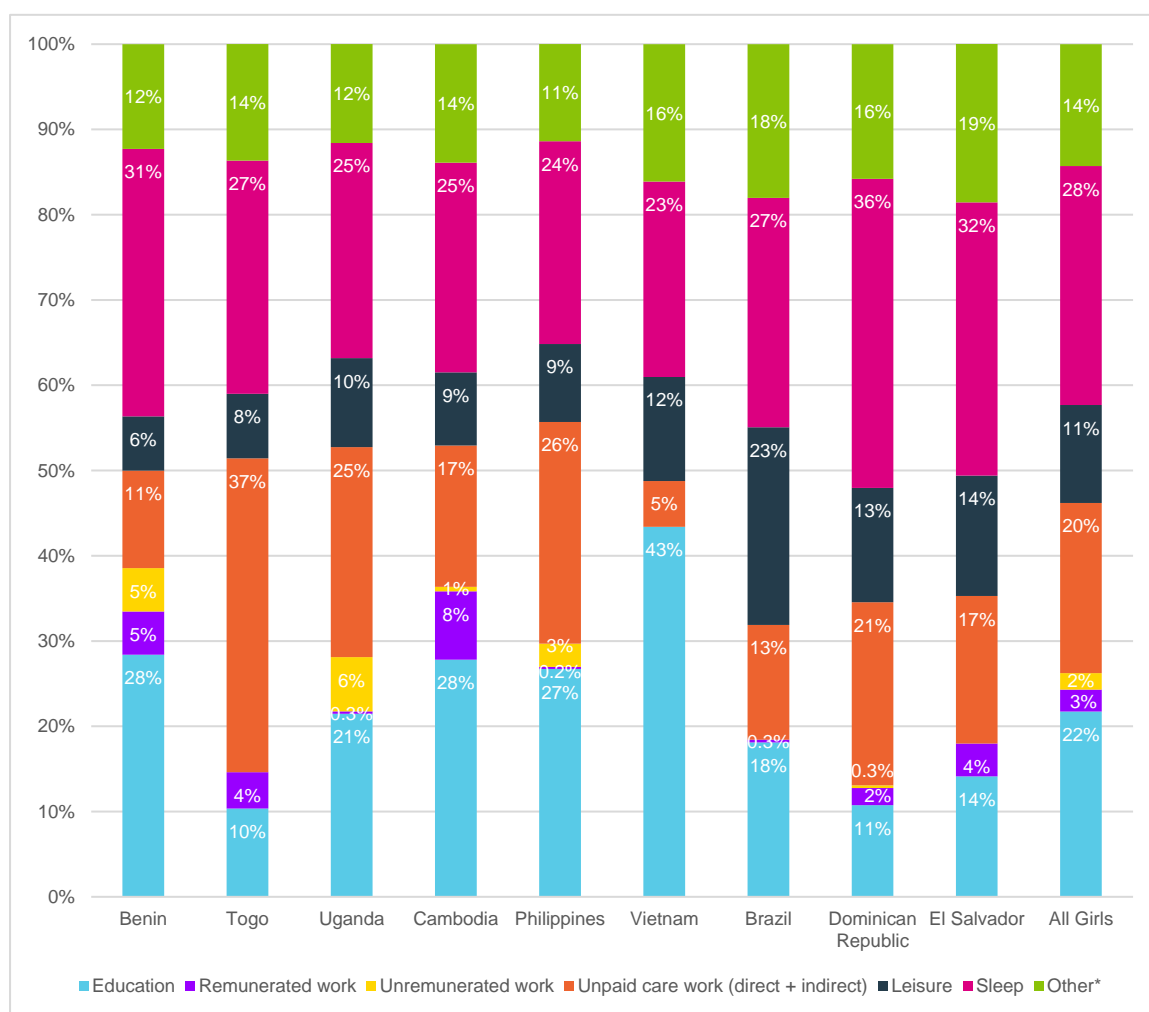
Similarly, Fernanda (Brazil) graduated from secondary school last year and is currently waiting to sit the university entrance exam. She works as a shop assistant on the weekends, but during the week she plays football and socialises with friends. However, all of Fernanda's time spent on these leisure activities are spent while simultaneously

taking care of her 6-year-old cousin; she brings her cousin along to her games with her. Both Fernanda and her mother minimised her level of care work when reflecting on her time use, demonstrating that when care activities are done alongside recreational activities, the 'primary' activity is considered to be the leisure one and the care labour is not fully recognised. Performing care work at the same time as other activities also contributes to time-poverty and reduces the benefits of rest and leisure. In fact, of the 80 girls who report having leisure time, only 32 of them (40 per cent) get to spend that time *solely* on leisure – not at the same time as caring for a sibling, doing chores, or performing other tasks.

5.1.6 Overall picture of girls' time use

Overall, we can see that many of the girls have extremely busy schedules and appear to be juggling numerous different priorities and responsibilities. Indeed, some of the girls' time use diaries were so packed with activities that they were writing in the margins of the page and cramming numerous items into individual hour blocks. When summarising their daily routines, it almost appears that some of the girls have more than 24-hours' worth of activities. Figure 13 below provides an overview of the average time spent by the cohort girls in each country on each key activity area.

Figure 13: Average proportion (%) of day spent on various activities, per focal country (all girls)



***Other activities** include personal care (such as bathing and eating meals), travel (for example, taking the bus to school) and religious observance (private prayer, attending a service).

Overall, we can see that unpaid care work takes up a great deal of the girls' time – and from the above figure, there appears to be a relationship between time spent on unpaid care work and time spent on other activities. In Togo, a significant proportion of the day is spent on unpaid care, with limited time dedicated to school and leisure. While Togolese girls spend more time on paid work than most other girls in the cohort, the fact that 4 of the 9 girls in Togo have dropped out of school we would expect their economic participation rates to be higher. Similarly, in the Dominican Republic, the girls spend more than 21 per cent of their day on unpaid care work and have a comparatively lower amounts of time spent on education (despite 9 of 12 girls being

enrolled in either school or university) and economic participation (despite 3 girls not being engaged in education activities). Meanwhile, the girls in Uganda spend much of their time on care activities as well as unremunerated work – and as a result we can see that they have less time for income-generating work and for leisure.

Conversely, in Vietnam the majority of the girls' time is spent on education (for an average of 43 per cent the day) and their unpaid care time is a fraction of the Togolese girls. However, the figure above reveals that Vietnamese girls are equally time poor – they have very little leisure time and have the fewest number of hours sleep of the cohort. From these diverse and contrasting patterns in how girls split

their time, we can see that it is important to understand what motivates this time use, and if and how these drivers have changed over the course of the girls' childhoods and adolescence to shape what their daily routines look like now. These motivations will be explored in the next section.

5.2 What motivates and influences the girls' time use?

Through exploring how the *Real Choices, Real Lives* girls split their time – both now but also throughout their childhoods and adolescences – it is apparent there are a number of common influences and drivers that define their time use. Chief among them is the influence of gender norms, which dictate the amount of time that the girls are expected to dedicate to unpaid care work. Other key influences of girls' time include household composition (that is – the number of people they live with, their ages, and their genders) and poverty; both factors intersect with gender norms to dictate the amount of time that girls spend on care activities, and how much time they have available for other pursuits. Girls' agency is another factor that influences their time use. Across the cohort, we can see that some of the girls' time use is motivated by their desire to develop knowledge and skills that they believe that they need for their futures.

5.2.1 “It’s nature”: gender norms and unpaid care work

Gender norms are reproduced and reinforced at the household level, with girls taught from a young age that domestic chores are an inevitable part of being a girl. Because these norms are introduced from infancy (through children observing their parents' dynamics), they are internalised and accepted as the natural way of things.²⁰⁹ **Girls learn and internalise these norms as they observe family dynamics in their homes.** The examples that their parents set, how caregivers divide labour in the home and assign care tasks among children, and attitudes about roles for women and men set the scene for expectations of girls' future time use – making it important to understand the gender norms at play in the cohort girls' homes as they were growing up.

From the beginning of the *Real Choices, Real Lives* study the cohort girls' caregivers have been interviewed annually. The interviews provide context about the cohort girls' lives, experiences and challenges they face – and they also shed light onto the lives, experiences and challenges of the parents themselves. Through historical analysis of *Real Choices, Real Lives* interviews, we can observe common household dynamics that the cohort girls were growing up in, the gender norms that influenced their mothers' time use, and the examples that were being set for the girls. In many of the cohort households, the girls' mothers have been responsible for the majority – if not all – of the unpaid care work.

“I change their diapers, I make their food, I bathe them and watch them, that’s what I contribute because he brings in the money.”

– Raquel's mother, 2012, El Salvador

“[Dariana’s father] doesn’t help me in the house, he is always doing something else, he is working and arrives home too tired, and since I am always in the house, I do everything here.”

– Dariana's mother, 2015, Dominican Republic

“We women are meant to do housework, and the men go looking for money. Its nature”

– Sheila's mother, 2012, Uganda

These gendered norms about unpaid care end up are held in place by wider family dynamics – with elder male relatives in the girls' households performing very few tasks in the home. In 2012, Amelia's father in Uganda explained the dynamics of his household, and the division of labour:

“If she’s around, usually the woman is in charge of the kitchen, she can give directives to her children to assist her... but if she’s not around, I can ask any of the children to serve me food. I can’t wait for her to come from wherever she has been to come and serve food.”

– Amelia’s father, 2012, Uganda

As we can see from Amelia’s father, the ‘hierarchy’ in his family was that chores were the domain of women, to be delegated to children as needed, but not to be passed on to men in the household. Barbara’s father in Benin expressed very similar sentiments the following year, saying: *“It is my wife [Barbara’s mother]. Yes, it is she who cooks and when she is ill or absent children cook”* (2013). In Uganda, Nimisha’s father explained that *“cooking and taking care of children as always been a responsibility of women”* – however he caveated, that *“in times when she is sick or away, I can come in to support”* (2015).

When asked to explain why responsibilities were shared a certain way within their households, overwhelmingly the answer over the years - and across all cohort countries - has been the same: **it is just the way things are**. In Benin, Isabelle’s mother explained in 2012 that *“the domestic duties are girls’ business.”*

From a young age, the girls have noticed and commented on this gendered division of labour in their homes. In 2013, when she was 7 years old, Jasmine (Philippines) shared that her mother does all of the cooking in their household, and her father only cooks if her mother is not around, while Rebeca in the Dominican Republic shared at age 9 that *“my dad doesn’t do chores, he only sleeps and eats”* (2015). In 2017, Doris (aged 10) in El Salvador, echoed Rebeca’s sentiments, saying: *“women do more chores than men. The men only play, watch TV, they don’t do anything,”* and in 2019 Natalia in Brazil (age 12) commented that her male relatives *“do nothing”* around the house. Fast forward to 2024, when asked about whether her father takes on any cleaning tasks in the house, Madelin in the Dominican Republic responds, *“no”* before bursting into laughter at the idea.

Girls imitating their mothers

How, then, do these attitudes about ‘natural’ time use for women and men influence behaviour? For the cohort girls, we can observe that their internalised of these **gender norms and adoption of gendered tasks originates with girls imitating their mothers**. In the early years of the study, many of the girls were described as being *“always”* with their mothers, or spending *“most of [their] time”* with their mothers. In the Philippines, Mahalia’s mother reported in 2015 (when Mahalia was 8) that Mahalia spent her time helping her with household chores, while her son (Mahalia’s brother) helped her husband (Mahalia’s father) on the farm. Similarly, Reyna (also in the Philippines) would sweep with her mother, while her father and brother fetched water together.

Girls spending time with and imitating their mothers in their early years is a common way that they observe, absorb and internalise information about different roles and behaviours considered to be acceptable for women and men, girls and boys. In Togo, Azia’s mother shared that reason that Azia is tasked with sweeping the house was because *“it’s an automatic activity for a girl”* (2024). Azia’s care work can be seen to be shaped by her mother’s attitude. When Azia was young, she spent the majority of her time with her mother and grandmother, and not only observed them washing dishes, sweeping, taking care of babies and performing other tasks – but she was also exposed to her mother’s view that chores are natural or inevitable pastimes for girls. Unsurprisingly, Azia’s mother shared that Azia had started asking to join in with chores from the age of 6; that same year Azia said that sweeping the yard was one of her favourite activities.

Playing house

‘Playing house’ is a common way that we can observe the ways that girls have internalised gender norms about the roles for girls and women – and this description of girls’ activities in the home is **also a way that girls’ care work is minimised**.²¹⁰ In 2011, when she was 5, Gabriela in Brazil was reported to spend her leisure time playing with dolls or playing house. Barbara (Benin) and Bessy (El Salvador) reported at ages 6 and 5 respectively that their preferred game was pretending to sweep the house,

while Sylvia (Uganda) shared at age 5 that sweeping was her favourite part of the day. At 5 years of age, twins Dembe and Jane (Uganda) enjoyed make-believe cooking to copy their mother, while Bopha in Cambodia shared when she was 10 years old that one of her favourite activities was *“playing cooking.”*

In Brazil, Sofia and Bianca both played house with their friends as children – and by age 8 (2015) they had begun to notice differences in how girls and boys play: Sofia observed that while she played house with her female friends, boys don’t play this, while Bianca said that she played a cooking game inside the house with her friends and her sisters – but her brothers play football in a field away from home. Through play, we can see the establishment of the home being associated as the sphere for girls and women, and the public sphere being a space that boys and men are expected to inhabit.

Preparing to be wives and mothers

As the girls got older, chores-as-play transformed in something else: chores as training for their futures as wives and mothers. Again, this can be seen to be a mindset that is passed on from parents (usually mothers) to daughters – the way that parents assign household chores passes these norms on to their children.²¹¹ In Benin, Thea’s mother reflected on the division of household tasks among her children, most of which fall to Thea and her sisters. Thea’s mother explained:

“[This is] normal because it’s a way for preparing them to be good wives and mothers and know how to keep their own home”

– Thea’s mother, 2015, Benin

Similarly, Margaret’s mother (also in Benin) shared that she makes Margaret do household chores – particularly cooking and cleaning - to make sure that she will be a *“good wife for later on”* (2019). In Togo, Djoumai’s mother shared in 2024, that is the goal of girls to be *“respectable housewives,”* while Djoumai herself shared in 2023 that she felt her responsibilities in the home – which included doing grocery shopping for the family – had been *“an apprenticeship for me.”* Essohana’s mother explained in 2015 that she makes Essohana sweep

the yard and fetch water with her sister because these are things she will need to know to do when she is married.

In some cases, **the cohort girls demonstrate having internalised the expectations of the roles they will play as wives and mothers.** In 2019 (at age 13) Azia in Togo explained that *“the most important thing for woman is to know how to cook for her family,”* while in 2022 (at age 15), Chesa reported:

“I do the laundry, wash the dishes, and clean the house. It’s okay with me because of course I’m the woman so I’m obliged to do the housework.”

– Chesa, age 15 (2022), the Philippines

“A good girl must know how to do housework”: the virtue of unpaid care work

The girls’ caregivers also describe unpaid care responsibilities as being essential for ensuring that their daughters grow up to become virtuous and respectable young women. In 2024, when asked why his daughter did household chores, Anti-Yara’s father (Togo) replies, *“because she’s a big girl and people will think badly of her if she doesn’t look after the house”* indicating the strong influence of social norms in dictating household labour. Sharina (Dominican Republic) was described by her parents in 2018, at age 12, as being a *“good girl”* because she spent all of her time when not in school either doing chores or homework. Over the years, Amelia, Dembe, Nimisha and Sylvia’s mothers (all in Uganda) all also expressed pride in their daughters for taking initiative about household tasks, which is viewed as a virtuous trait in a young woman.

“[Sylvia] does almost the chores without being told because she has grown. She does farming, cooking, washing, cleaning of the house without being told. Her behaviours are now changing as she is growing because she can now identify what is good and bad unlike before where almost her time could be spent while playing.”

– Sylvia’s mother, 2024, Uganda

This social construction of **household tasks as 'good' or virtuous for a girl and play as 'bad' or frivolous for a young woman, echoes in the words of the cohort girls themselves.** Studies show that children often comply with norms about unpaid care in order to seek rewards (such as praise) or because they wish to avoid sanctions (including criticism or violence).²¹² It is evident from the cohort girls' stories that this gendered notion of virtue has cascaded to them through the attitudes and expectations of their parents – and many comply in order to approval and validation. At age 8, Griselda in the Dominican Republic was asking her mother if she could do chores after school so that she could learn and be helpful, while in Cambodia, Kannitha reported at age 10 that her mother called her a *“good daughter”* (2017) because she did housework. In Benin, Eleanor also shared at 11 years old that her mother told her that a *“good girl”* and a *“good daughter”* is *“a girl who knows how to wash dishes, sweep and laundry”* (2018) – and so these were things Eleanor was trying hard to do.

This socialisation has remained with many of the girls: in 2024, Chesa in the Philippines shared that she is *“happy”* that she had learned how to do laundry *“because I’m able to help mama with the house chores”* and Shifa in Uganda is proud to report that, *“right now I can attend to a task without having to be told to do it.”* At 11 years old, Alice in Benin described this gendered notion of the requirements of a 'virtuous girl' aptly, saying:

“A good girl must know how to do housework for her mother and pay attention to the advice from her mother and father. I am a good daughter to both; I can do domestic chores, and I listen to their advice, and I am respectful.”

– Alice, age 11 (2018), Benin

Relatedly, some parents in the cohort have shared over the years that **they feel that unpaid care work keeps girls out of trouble** – and care activities are therefore seen as a protective factor against unvirtuous behaviours, namely, spending time with boys. These concerns were expressed by a number of mothers in Benin, as well as by Hillary's mother in El Salvador. Hillary's mother explained in 2017 that

she was trying to raise her daughter to be hard working and didn't like when Hillary spent time in the care of her paternal grandfather who let her be idle – which Hillary's mother felt put her daughter at risk of encountering a *“flirty boy.”*

It's just 'help'

A common way that the cohort girls and their parents talk about the girls' responsibilities in the home is in terms of 'help' or 'assistance' to their mothers – not as 'work'. Describing the work that girls perform in the home as 'help' instead of recognising it as care or labour undermines and minimises the value of girls' contributions to the household.²¹³ This in turn **leads girls themselves to not recognise the labour perform in the home as 'work'** and not consider themselves as 'caregivers' despite the amount of care work they perform.²¹⁴ Over the years, we see this play out in the way that the parents and cohort girls talk about their girls' unpaid care work.

Girls in El Salvador frame their household contributions as 'help' rather than work or labour. In 2018, when Gladys was 11, her mother described her chores:

“[Gladys] helps me clean the house and helps her little brother [...] they help me with the cleaning, they help me to sweep, to wash their dishes, make their beds, pick up their stuff, put their things away”

– Gladys's mother, 2018, El Salvador

Two years later, when asked about her household responsibilities, Gladys, like Maricel, also described her contributions as 'help'.

“When I get up, I go to help my mum do some housework, if she is washing, I help her hang out the clothes she is washing [...] After that, after doing the chores... we have breakfast [...] Then I help her make the cheese.”

– Gladys, age 13 (2020), El Salvador

Now 17 years old, Gladys still describes her chores as things she does to “*help my mother*”. When asked about how she feels about the way she splits her time, Gladys shared that she would like to “*help my mum more*”. This example is critical in revealing

the connection between parental attitudes and the beliefs and behaviours of their children – over the years, the cohort girls have demonstrably learned and internalised gender norms from their parents.

Box 4: “I’m happy helping my mother” – a case study

Maricel (Philippines) has helped her mother with chores since she was little. From a young age she was responsible for collecting water, washing clothes, and helping with cooking. Her brother, on the other hand, wasn’t expected to do many chores because “*he doesn’t like washing clothes*” (Maricel’s mother, 2020). In 2017, when Maricel was 10 years old, her father stated that “*Girls are just assistants, anything you ask them to do,*” and later in 2020 her mother said that “*it’s difficult to ask my son for help unlike Maricel who is always there to help.*”

Fast-forward to 2024 and Maricel spends eight hours a day on unpaid care work. decided to reduce the time she spends doing paid work at the resort her mother also works at, “*because there are many other tasks at home*” so she prioritises housework and taking care of her niece so that her mother can work. It is not something Maricel questions. For her, it appears, it is not work, but just ‘help.’ In 2024, Maricel shares that she doesn’t want to change how she spends her time because “*I’m happy helping my mother.*”

Maricel’s mother had previously stated a commitment to her children’s education and hoped that her daughter would go on to college after school:

“I always tell them to finish their education because look at our lives who didn’t study.”

– Maricel’s mother, 2021, the Philippines

But the realities of daily life and the power dynamics in the family appear to have eroded this commitment, and only a few years later Maricel’s mother’s hopes for her daughter appear to have been diminished. When asked in 2024 if she thought that Maricel had enough time to develop skills for her future, Maricel’s mother says:

“If you know about housework it will be easier for her to find [a similar] job. Like how she helped me sweep here at the resort, she already knows how to do such jobs.”

– Maricel’s mother, 2024, the Philippines

Framing unpaid care work as ‘help’ means that many girls do not recognise that the care labour that they perform in the home is indeed work. In 2024, Reyna in the Philippines was asked if she is paid for taking care of her five nephews – which she does every day. Reyna responds, “*that’s not work. I help them with that.*” Despite her direct care responsibilities taking up around 4 hours of her day, Reyna does not conceptualise this as ‘work’ – meaning it is very easy to minimize or overlook her contributions. Indeed, when asked about the care

work that Reyna performs in the home, her father said only that Reyna “*helps*” her sister.

Replacing their mothers’ labour

Noticeably, across the cohort the girls almost universally refer to this ‘help’ in relation to their mothers. By taking on care responsibilities such as cleaning and meal preparation, they see themselves as reducing some of their mother’s workload. This is in contrast to, for example,

conceptualising the care work they perform as contributing to the overall household, to the wellbeing of their family at large, or as something that everyone in the household contributes to equally. **The idea of girls ‘helping their mothers’ reinforces a deeply entrenched gendered norm that care work is the domain of women** - which can be delegated to others but for which ultimate responsibility sits with the woman. This sets the stage for girls to gradually replace their mother’s unpaid care work in the home as their mothers engage in paid work outside the home, unremunerated work on subsistence agriculture, or as they age. According to the *Real Choices, Real Lives* girls, this is a key driver of their unpaid care work.

Across the cohort, there are reports of girls replacing their mother’s labour from young ages. In 2016 (at age 9), Sen in Vietnam reported that she did the majority of the cooking, cleaning and caring for her young siblings because her mother was busy working. In Togo, Nini-Rike – who lives in a polygamous household - also reports replacing her mothers’ labour in the house when they were occupied doing farm work, saying in 2020:

“I look after my younger brothers and sisters when my mummies are working in the fields.”

– Nini-Rike, age 13 (2020), Togo

Underestimated and under-recognised

In 2024, during interviews with the cohort girls we asked them to complete a 24-hour diary exercise which broke down their day into hourly blocks. The girls reported the main activities they performed each hour throughout the day, as well as any simultaneous activities that they ‘multi-tasked.’ Separately, the girls’ caregivers were asked to report on how much time their daughter spent on daily activities such as school, homework, chores

and leisure. Among the girls who do perform unpaid care work, almost without exception, **caregivers dramatically underestimated the amount of time that their daughters dedicated to these tasks.**^{dd} In Brazil, Gabriela’s mother – who recently gave birth to a baby daughter - reports that Gabriela “*doesn’t look after anyone*”. By contrast, Gabriela states that she performs 3 hours of unpaid care work per day, saying:

“While my mother is taking care of the baby, I do chores. And when she’s doing chores, I take care of the girl.”

– Gabriela, age 18 (2024), Brazil

Similarly, in the Philippines, Jasmine’s mother greatly understates the amount of time her daughter spends on unpaid care work. While Jasmine reports doing around 11 hours per day of indirect care work, including preparing meals, running errands for her grandmother, and doing work on the family’s farm, her mother says that she could not estimate the time Jasmine spends on housework because she “*only helps*” with some tasks, and does “*just a little*” around the house. When asked about her daughter’s contribution to farm work, Jasmine’s mother says that Jasmine “*just tags along*.”^{ee}

Meanwhile, in West Africa, a number of caregivers reports not knowing how their daughters spend their time – or suggest that the cohort girls decide for themselves about the amount of unpaid care work they perform – rather than being directed or influenced by external pressures or expectations. In Togo, Ayomide’s aunt only reports that Ayomide fetches water, prepares meals and does washing “*like all girls*” – but failed to acknowledge the hours of direct care that Ayomide performs in taking care of her 2-year-old daughter. Ayomide says that 22 hours of her day are spent doing some form of unpaid care work – including breastfeeding her baby in the middle of the night and doing chores and direct care work simultaneously.

^{dd} Although the caregivers were asked how many hours they thought the girls spent on each category of activity, they tended to answer this question not with statements of hours or minutes but in broad estimates (for example: when asked how many hours Quynh (Vietnam) spends at school on an average day, her mother replied, “*Oh, she studies all day, there’s no break*”; when asked how much time Sofia (Brazil) spends on unpaid care work, her mother said, “*I tell her to do her own laundry...I ask her to help me around the house, sweep the house, wash the dishes. She helps me a lot with these things*”). Because these answers were not provided numerically (despite prompting), we cannot directly compare the girls’ reports with their parents’ estimates in terms of hours, but the content of their caregivers’ responses provides us with enough information for comparison. The lack of precise numerical estimations provided by most caregivers also speaks to their lack of awareness of the extent of the cohort girls’ care responsibilities.

^{ee} *Real Choices, Real Lives* is committed to centring the experiences, realities and voices of girls, and thus we prioritise the accounts provided by the girls themselves in all cases documented in this report. We take the position that girls must be trusted and believed as experts about their own lives, and this begins at the individual and personal level.

In Benin, Isabelle's aunt states that *"Isabelle doesn't do any chores for me or anyone else"* – but then went on to specify that Isabelle prepares all meals in the home, sweeps the bedroom and courtyard, does the household washing, and looks after young family members *"when the need arises"*. Also in Benin, Margaret's mother reports: *"[Margaret] does the housework, but I can't control the time she spends doing it"*. This tendency to underestimate the number of hours of care work that girls perform – or to frame it as a self-driven activity that the girls enjoy – serves to render invisible the work that girls do in their households, and how essential these contributions are to the running of their households.

Boys' role in the home

The gender norms that drive and inform girls' unpaid care responsibilities also shape the attitudes and behaviour of their brothers and other boys in their families. The cohort girls observe that their **brothers and other male peers have far fewer household responsibilities than they do**. In Togo, Djoumai – then 10 years old – observed that in her family, *"the boys do not work at home at all. They only go to farm and also keep livestock"* (2016) while Sheila in Uganda said that *"boys spend less time on their chores and girls spend more time on the chores"* (2019). When she was 11 years old, Bianca (Brazil) observed that she and her older sister did more household chores than their brothers, saying *"the boys only do chores when their mother tells them to"* (2018). In the Philippines, Melanie observed in 2017:

"While the girls are just inside the house sweeping, arranging things, cleaning the dishes, and things like that. Boys just collect water."

– Melanie, age 11 (2017), the Philippines

Some of the girls have begun to identify gendered social norms that underpin these differences in time use. In Brazil, Bianca observed that men are too busy with paid work to be able to do tasks in the home, saying her father and brother *"don't do chores at home because they already do other things. So, there's no way for them to do anything here"* (2024). This idea of men having a normative

role as providers – which prevents them from spending their time on other activities like unpaid care work – is echoed by a number of the other girls and their caregivers. In Togo, Nini-Rike said at age 10 that it was *"fair"* that women *"do the cooking"* because *"men look for money to feed their families"* (2017). In 2015, Alice's father (Benin) stated that men do not work in the home because those jobs are for their wives and daughters; he also further explained that boys are not trained in the business of household chores *"because they will have to leave home after [they finish school] so they need to know how to be responsible for themselves"* – meaning they need to spend their time on activities related to their future economic independence.

In 2024, Bopha (Cambodia) says that her brothers do not have time for household chores: her older brother goes to work, and her younger brother goes to school. What Bopha failed to acknowledge here is that she, too, goes to school – indeed, Bopha spends 4 hours at school and a further 4 on homework and revision, on top of the 8 hours she spends on unpaid care work at home. But seemingly, her brother's education is considered more essential for his future – meaning he does not have time for unpaid care work. Another apt example comes from Darna in the Philippines. In 2024, Darna reported that she had moved into a boarding house in the city with her older brother while she completes school. Her brother works during the day while Darna attends school, however in the evenings the household work is not divided equally between them. Darna is responsible for all cooking, cleaning, and other household upkeep.

"I'd also like my brother to do some of the house chores at the boarding house because I'm just doing everything [she laughs]."

– Darna, age 18 (2024), the Philippines

Alice and her mother, who live in Benin, identify another norm that informs gendered time use – the construction of **normative ideas of masculinity, and the shame and stigma attached to deviation from these gender rules**. In 2017, Alice said, *"my mother always draws the water my father has never done it because the women cannot stand by and watch the men doing it"* – sharing that it would be

shameful to both her mother and father. Alice's mother elaborates on this further, saying:

“It’s because [Alice’s father] is the head of the household and in our culture men who are heads of families must not go fetch water.... It would be a shame for himself and his whole family. He’s the chief of the family and a chief doesn’t do household chores.

– Alice’s mother, 2015, Benin

This idea that unpaid care work is a threat to concepts of masculinities, is shared by other girls and their families across the cohort. In Togo, Nini-Rike’s mother shared that *“it would be shameful for a man to be seen sweeping the courtyard”* (2017) and Anti-Yara reported in 2019 (at age 13) that her father instructed her 10-year-old brother not to do housework with his sisters because these jobs were for girls.

In the Dominican Republic, a number of girls and their mothers commented on a societal preoccupation with unpaid care work being associated with homosexuality or femininity. In 2017, Chantal shared that generally in her community, boys can sweep and tidy but are not expected to cook or wash clothes, because people *“will call him gay”*, while Sharina’s mother explains that she doesn’t make her son do chores *“because he tells me he isn’t a girl”* (2017). While she said she doesn’t agree with his mindset, Sharina’s mother appeared to give it some credence, saying *“I don’t like getting him to do chores.”* Dariana’s mother shared something similar in 2015 – however she was determined to challenge this mindset.

“I have the boy washing the dishes, also sweeping inside the house but he cries, and tells me, ‘I am not gay.’ I tell him doing chores is not only for girls, boys also have rights. I tell him that the day you finish school and move into your own house, you will rot due to the dirt in your house, and then he gets quiet. He is 11 years old.”

– Dariana’s mother, 2015 Dominican Republic

The implications of a more gender-equal division of care

Across the cohort we can see that some of the girls’ caregivers (often their mothers) are challenging gendered norms about household divisions of labour and the broader picture of how women and men spend their time. This has a demonstrable influence on their daughters’ time use. In Vietnam we see the greatest number of families sharing unpaid care work between men and women. In 2015, Quynh’s mother explained the everyone in her house is responsible for contributing to household chores.

“If my eldest daughter goes to school, I and my husband will do housework. If I come back home early, I will do outside housework, breeding and help my eldest daughter. Anyone who is not busy will help the others.”

– Quynh’s mother, 2015, Vietnam

Quynh’s mother also remarked in 2015 that she feels lucky that her husband actively helps with housework and has encouraged her to go for hired work while he cares of their children. Similarly, in Tan’s household, her father reportedly shares the unpaid care work with his wife – preparing meals for the children and accompanying them to school (as at 2015), and Huong and Sen’s mothers shared similar reports about their husbands in 2018

“My husband also does the chores when he comes home after and finds the chores I haven’t done. So, do I. I also do what he has not done yet. We do not discriminate between men’s and women’s duties.”

– Huong’s mother, 2018, Vietnam

“It is equal in my house. When I go to work, my husband stays at home and does all the chores from washing clothes to cooking. If we go out, go to somewhere, or go to do something, anyone who comes home first will do the chores.”

– Sen’s mother, 2018, Vietnam

Among the global cohort, the girls in Vietnam report doing the fewest hours of unpaid care – an average of roughly an hour and 20 minutes compared with the global average of 5 hours 15 minutes.^{ff} This demonstrates how **caregiver attitudes and behaviours set the stage for the time that girls will spend on unpaid care work as adolescents.**

In other households across the cohort, while the unpaid care work might not be shared equally between the girls’ parents, their mothers are doing their best to promote an equal division of labour between their daughters and sons. In El Salvador, Stephany’s mother said that chores are shared equally among her children – she makes a list of the tasks that need to be completed, and these are divided amongst the children, who can decide for themselves who does what. Stephany’s mother was passionate about challenging the notion that unpaid care work is inherently feminine or a threat to masculinities, saying:

“Men say that when they see us washing, ‘I am a man, I don’t need to do that, that is women’s work.’ ‘No,’ I tell them, ‘You can do this, you aren’t going to become women just by washing. You can do this, that is why you have good hands, and you aren’t going to become women just for that.’”

– Stephany’s mother, 2017, El Salvador

Perhaps as a result of her mothers’ attitude, Stephany reports in 2024 that she does around 3 hours of indirect care work per day, compared with the 4 and a half hours of care performed on average by the El Salvador cohort. Similarly,

Amelia’s mother in Uganda said, *“I don’t differentiate work”* (2017) and that her children cook for the family *“if it’s their turn”* – implying that this task is shared among household members. In 2024, Amelia reports doing 4 hours of indirect care work per day, which is 3 hours fewer than the average reported by the girls in Uganda.

Importantly, in some households the emphasis seems to be placed on the cohort girls having their time protected in order to attend classes, complete their homework, and graduate from school. In Cambodia, Mony’s mother shared in 2014 that while her daughter was able to take on more responsibilities around the house (being 7 years old at that point), Mony’s mother had tried to discourage this so that Mony could prioritise her homework.

“This child knows more than before. She knows how to wash dishes, sometimes help to cook rice, clean the house. But I dare not let her do alone. I want my child to do homework only.”

– Mony’s mother, 2014, Cambodia

This shows a powerful connection between parents’ attitudes and adherence to gender social norms about unpaid care, and how this shapes their daughters’ time use as adolescents.

“It is not fair”: Girls challenging the gender rules

Like some of their mothers, many of the cohort girls are resisting gender rules in their everyday lives – something that *Real Choices, Real Lives* has explored and documented in detail over the years.²¹⁵ For many years, the girls have expressed their frustration and sense of injustice about the way that unpaid care work is divided in their households. At 12 years of age, Raisa in the Dominican Republic shared, *“I don’t think it’s right because if we girls do them [chores], the boys should do them too”* (2018); also in the Dominican Republic, Griselda said that *“boys should have the*

^{ff} These averages (both Vietnam and global cohort) are inclusive of all girls, including those who report doing no unpaid care work (0 hours). When only looking at the number of hours among girls who report doing unpaid care work, the girls in Vietnam still report doing around 3.5 fewer hours of care work than the global cohort average (1 hour 50 minutes versus 5 hours 34 minutes).

same duties as girls” (2019). In Togo, Fezire expressed her irritation about her brothers’ resistance to doing household chores, saying:

“They still don’t do any housework which they say is for girls. This annoys me sometimes; mummy tells them to do it, but they refuse.”

– Fezire, age 15 (2021), Togo

This year, when asked if her brothers’ time use had changed, Fezire curses and says, *“no, it hasn’t changed. Are they even doing anything? TsrUUUU!”* Meanwhile, in Uganda, Miremba shared in 2018 that she thinks *“it is not fair”* that women do all of the cooking while *“the man just sits waiting to eat.”* For some girls, **this sense of injustice has inspired them to directly challenge the status quo.** Amelia, in Uganda, reported in 2023 that she has begun charging her brothers for doing their laundry in order to demonstrate that the value of the work that she is performing for them. She laughed as she explained her set-up:

“My brothers usually ask me to do laundry for them, yet I am busy. So, if any of them wants to engage me, they must pay for my service [she laughs].”

– Amelia, age 16 (2023), Uganda

From the testimonies of the cohort girls over the years, we can see that gender norms are a key driver of the high levels of unpaid care work that they perform in their households. In many communities, the gendered division of labour is so deeply entrenched that it has become *doxa* – or an unquestioned state that is assumed to be ‘natural’ and ‘just the way things are’. By exploring the historical data collected over the past 18 years of the study, we can observe how the girls are socialised to observe these norms through first imitating their mother and ‘playing house’, before contributing to household work as ‘help’ to their mother, then gradually replacing their mother’s labour in the home.

Box 5: CEFMU, early pregnancy and girls' time use – a case study

Intimately related with gender norms and girls' time use is the relationship between CEFMU, early pregnancy and high levels of unpaid care work associated with marriage and motherhood. Through the experience of the ten girls in the cohort who are married or in a union, and the 7 girls who have one or more children,⁹⁹ we can see that marriage and motherhood are uniquely powerful drivers of girls' unpaid care work. While this is inextricably connected with gender norms, the intensity of the care labour that girls perform when they marry and have children notably differentiates their experience from their peers.

Katerin (18) in the Dominican Republic is married – her husband is 27 years old and the two have been together since Katerin was 15. The couple has two children: Miguel was born in November 2021, and Martha was born in early 2023.^{hh} Katerin dropped out of school when she was pregnant with Miguel, however she talks about returning to finish her education and signing up to Prepara – a university foundation/bridging course. The obstacle to continuing her education, Katerin says, is childcare – explaining that, *“it's hard for me because of the children”* (2024). Katerin has also explored finding paid work and has looked at applying for a job at a bank, but again found that it was too difficult to balance shift work around caring for her children. The main motivation that Katerin had for seeking paid work was *“so I'm not in the house on my own”* (2024) – she feels isolated from her friends and spends most of her time alone caring for her children.

In 2024, Katerin reports spending an average of 22 hours per day on unpaid care work. Katerin is breastfeeding Martha, which means that she needs to wake up throughout the night; and during the day she prepares meals, bathes her children, does laundry for the household, cleans the house and performs any number of other chores while also supervising her children. When asked if her husband also does household chores, Katerin says he did not, *“because he's working.”* Katerin's husband is a plumber and a welder and leaves the house for work at 6am, not returning home between 8 and 10pm. Katerin shares that he is often on call during the evenings and that he works on Saturdays too, meaning he is rarely around to take care of the children and do chores around the house.

When *Real Choices, Real Lives* interviewers visited Katerin in 2024, she and her children were staying with Katerin's mother, Virginia, who lives in another town. Virginia explains that Katerin had left her husband for a temporary break because *“[Katerin] says she's tired of doing the housework.”* Virginia shares that it is tiring and *“very stressful”* for Katerin, because *“there is no day off for mothers.”* Like Katerin's husband, Virginia also works – however she says that she is able to provide Katerin with more support, explaining:

“No, it's not the same, because I work of course, but, when I'm here in the house, I, she's here, we help each other, of course. I cook, she cleans, I scrub. And so, we help each other. It's not the same as taking care of the children, cooking and doing everything by herself.”

– Katerin's mother, 2024, Dominican Republic

Katerin's story is just one example of how marriage and motherhood inform girls' care responsibilities: with two young children, Katerin spends almost every hour of the day actively performing direct and indirect care activities, which limits the time she has available to finish her education, take on paid work, socialise with friends and rest. Gender norms demonstrably influence time use within Katerin's household: she stays home with the children and does unpaid care work while her husband goes out to engage in paid employment; Katerin shares care labour with her mother instead. However, Katerin is hopeful for the future. She would like to finish her education, and one day move to Mexico. Of having children while in her teens, Katerin says:

“People say that their children were a mistake, but my children weren't a mistake [...] As long as my children have everything, I don't have anything to worry about.”

– Katerin, age 18 (2024), Dominican Republic

⁹⁹ Five girls are both married/in a union and have one or more children; four girls are married/in a union and do not have children (one is pregnant); and two girls are single mothers.

^{hh} The names of Katerin, her children and her mother have all been changed.

5.2.2 “My brother doesn’t do the housework because there are so many of us girls in the house”: household make-up and gendered time use

Gender norms also intersect with household composition to inform girls’ time use. Studies have found that girls living in households where there are children aged seven years and younger spend considerably more time on care responsibilities²¹⁶ - and our research finds that this is also true for the cohort girls. Girls in the cohort who are the **oldest daughters tend to perform the greatest amount of direct and indirect care** over the years – particularly when there are babies and small children in the house. Reyna, in the Philippines, who lives in a house with 5 nephews under the age of ten, performs 4 hours of direct care per day; this is a similar level to the direct care done by Folami (Togo) and Hillary (El Salvador) who are both mothers.

Girls who have sisters, or who live in households with multiple women, talk about sharing the cooking and the chores, and report feeling less time poor. Chantal in the Dominican Republic explains that between her and her two sisters they keep the house tidy; while Anti-Yara in Togo reports that her housework has reduced because her younger sister has now started doing chores:

“My tasks have diminished. My little sister started working. I used to wash the plates, fetch water and prepare the food. But now, [my sister] washes the plates and helps me fetch the water”

– Anti-Yara, age 18 (2024), Togo

However, having more girls and women in the house to do unpaid care work does not necessarily equate to a reduced workload: when there are numerous men and boys in the house (especially in houses where men do not do unpaid care work) then this can simply mean that all girls and women are equally overstretched and time poor. Nini-Rike (Togo) lives in a polygamous household: her father has four wives (including her mother), and 20 children. Nini-Rike has 13 brothers (aged 4 to 33 years), six younger sisters (aged 13 years and younger) and one older sister. During her childhood,

Nini-Rike and her older sister shared many household responsibilities together with their mother and stepmothers; however, with 14 men and boys in the house to take care of in a deeply patriarchal household, the girls and women were juggling a heavy unpaid care load.

From age 5 Nini-Rike has fetched water, and her household responsibilities have steadily increased over time; by 12 years old, Nini-Rike reported feeling over-stretched – nearly all of her time was spent either at school or doing chores, including sweeping, building the fire, cooking and washing dishes. The following year, Nini-Rike was waking up at 4am each day to ensure she had enough time to do all of her chores before school. However, in recent years, Nini-Rike’s unpaid care workload has reduced; her younger sisters have now reached ages where they can be expected to take on a share of the housework.

“My housework has decreased. As the children get older, we share the work... we work together, and it doesn’t take long.”

– Nini-Rike, age 17 (2024), Togo

Despite feeling that she is “*not too busy*” because she can delegate chores to her younger sisters, Nini-Rike now wakes up at 3am to begin cooking for the family and doing chores. Other girls in the cohort highlight a similar issue: **more girls in the household doesn’t necessarily mean less work; in fact – in some cases it guarantees that the men and boys will do no housework.**

“My brother doesn’t do the housework because there are so many of us girls in the house.”

– Alice, age 17 (2024), Benin

We can also see that older girls induct their younger sisters into household duties. In Uganda, Beti reports that now she does “*much more of the supervisory role*”, delegating chores to her four sisters who are aged 8 to 14 years. When Beti speaks of passing on responsibilities to her sisters, we can see echoes of the messages that were given to the cohort girls when they were younger:

that household chores are preparations for their future roles and responsibilities:

“My younger siblings are now growing, which is more reason why they too should learn the things that I learnt.”

– Beti, age 17 (2024), Uganda

Another way that girls' time use is influenced by household composition is when other family members – particularly their mothers, older sisters and other female relatives – spend more time outside the home. In the Philippines, Chesa said *“my responsibilities and house chores increased since my older siblings now work far away”* (2024) while in Cambodia, Kannitha shared that she does lots more housework than before *“because my one sister is busy at her salon shop and another one sister is pregnant”* (2024). In Uganda, Sylvia explained in 2023 that she must do the cooking and cleaning when she mother is absent, saying:

“As a girl, I have to cook, especially if mom has gone to the garden and left me home. I have to keep the home clean so that she returns when the place is neat, and food has been prepared. I also do laundry for her.”

– Sylvia, age 16 (2023), Uganda

5.2.3 Poverty

There is a clear link between poverty and girls' time use. Poverty contributes to excessive time spent on unpaid care work due to a lack of access to infrastructure, and an inability to afford time- and labour-saving equipment and services. Research in Uganda, the Philippines and other countries found that girls from the poorest households spend an average of seven hours more per week on care labour than girls in more affluent households. This has a significant impact on education: girls in poorer households devote five fewer hours each week to education than girls from wealthier households.²¹⁷

Particularly time-consuming tasks reported by the cohort girls are collecting firewood and fetching

water - and these chores are associated with households experiencing poverty. Homes in deprived areas may not be attached to water mains, and so water must be collected from wells or from public water sources and carried to the house for cooking, cleaning and bathing. This can take a significant amount of time if the water source is far from the home, or if multiple trips need to be done to collect enough water to meet the needs of all members of the household. In Eastern, Southern and West Africa, girls and women are responsible for over 70 per cent of water collection, with this labour taking an average of 1.4 hours per day.²¹⁸ Similarly, the need to collect firewood is often caused by poverty – with homes lacking electricity or the means to purchase fuel sources for cooking, meaning that meals must be heated over fire, water boiled for safe drinking and for bathing, and homes heated using firewood.

Nearly half of the cohort girls report spending time each day collecting firewood, water or both

– and some must do these jobs multiple times per day. Ten of the 12 cohort girls in Uganda, and nine of the 12 girls in El Salvador report spending time collecting firewood or fetching water, making these some of the most common household chores performed by the girls in these countries. In El Salvador, Bessy's grandmother describes Bessy's household chores:

“She helps me to bring in water, to see if I can eat, we always have a wood cooker and we roast like this on that iron griddle, she says to me: ‘Mommy, I’m going to help her bring firewood’, even if it’s small branches, but she’s going to bring me some, but she likes to collect small branches for the fire. Sometimes she goes out there to chase the goats, she brings me handfuls of firewood and helps me to fetch water, wash the dishes, sweep.”

– Bessy's grandmother, 2024, El Salvador

Bessy spends a total of 4 hours per day on household chores: two of these hours are dedicated to collecting firewood and water. Similarly, in Uganda, Justine's mother reports that when her daughter visits home from boarding school, she is responsible for collecting firewood and water.

“Here in the village, we use firewood to cook food and normally [Justine] goes and collects them and brings at home without even being asked to do so. She can also use our bicycle to fetch water from the borehole and brings it home without being asked.”

– Justine’s mother, 2024, Uganda

Poverty also influences girls’ time use in other ways. Notably, a number of the girls in the cohort have **taken on remunerated work in order to contribute to the household income** due to livelihood losses and deprivation experienced by their families. Valeria, in El Salvador, is the sole breadwinner of her household – which comprises her younger brother and sister, as well as her grandmother) as her mother is currently in prison awaiting trial on drug charges. Since her mother’s imprisonment, Valeria’s family have been struggling to make ends meet. Valeria works six days per week selling snacks on the beach in order to support her family, and she no longer attends school. Valeria, who is 17 years old, is exposed to significant risks in her work: the area that she sells beach snacks in is a known area for sex workⁱⁱ and illegal drug sales. Of her work, Valeria says, *“it has helped us a lot, well, that job”* (2024), and her grandmother adds that Valeria has been able to pay for her younger brother’s school costs – but thinks that Valeria’s employers are *“exploiting her”* with long hours and forced overtime.

Just as Valeria’s time use was influenced by a significant change in her household dynamic, other girls in the cohort have adapted and responded to shocks by changing how they split their time. In 2023, the cohort girls were interviewed about their experiences of climate change and the impacts on their education; as part of these interviews many of the girls shared experiences of livelihood losses and deepening deprivation in their households and communities as a result of climate change. This is particularly the case for girls who come from farming families. In Cambodia, Kannitha, Mony and Nakry all first began working in order to contribute to their household incomes which had been impacted by climate change.

5.2.4 Agency to develop knowledge and skills for the future

A number of the girls’ time use can be seen to be **motivated by their desire to develop knowledge and skills they feel that they need for their futures**. For some girls, this means prioritising their education and training opportunities – and dedicating their time use accordingly. In Uganda, Justine is determined to complete her education; she lives at boarding school and spends 9 hours in classes, and then does a further 7 hours of study and revision every day. Justine does not do any remunerated or unremunerated work or have any care responsibilities during the school term; she also reports only 1 hour of leisure time each day (during her lunch break) and gets less than 5 hours of sleep per night – waking up at 4am to revise her lessons. Justine said in 2024 that she spends less time with friends this year as she wants to focus on her schoolwork.

“If I give more time to socializing as compared to reading my books, my studies might be affected. So, I just have to maintain.”

– Justine, age 17 (2024), Uganda

Of the dedicated and single-minded use of her time, Justine said that decides for herself how she spends her time and does this because she is *“preparing for my future.”* Justine aspires to graduate from school, go to university and become a medical doctor; she said that her role model is Doctor Specioza Kazibwe, the first female Vice President of Uganda:

“She inspires me, and I look up to her because she was a woman who became the first female vice president in Uganda, and she was a great surgeon doctor too.”

– Justine, age 17 (2024), Uganda

ⁱⁱ While sex work is not illegal under national law in El Salvador, it is prohibited by some municipal ordinances. Furthermore, as a minor Valeria is at heightened risk of being subjected to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Likewise, some of the girls demonstrate making agentic decisions about their time-use with regards to paid work. Some girls choose to work in order to learn new skills or a trade, while some are motivated to make money for their personal spending, to pay for educational supplies like textbooks, or to contribute to the household. Anti-Yara (Togo) works as a cleaner in a hotel during the school holidays, saying that she does this work *“because I can’t afford the school fees, it’s up to me at the start of the school year [to pay them]”* (2024). Anti-Yara says that she likes her job because *“it’s not too difficult”* and that she uses her income to pay for school supplies, school fees, and food. Justine and Anti-Yara’s stories demonstrate that a key driver of girls’ time use is also their desire to prepare for their futures, and the girls are making agentic decisions about how they divide their time in order to support these goals.

It is also important to acknowledge that many of the girls in the cohort decide to carry out different activities of unpaid care work willingly – often doing so because they feel that their contributions to their family are valuable and appreciated. Bianca (Brazil) is an example of this, she has graduated from secondary school and now, with more time, she is happy to do more chores around the house. She takes agentic decisions regarding how her time is prioritised, including not only chores but spending time with friends.

“Yes, I am [happy]. Now I can help my mother, she works hard, she doesn’t have much time to do chores.”

– Bianca, age 17 (2024), Brazil

Overall, the experiences of the cohort girls indicate that there are four main drivers that dictate girls’ time spent on unpaid care (gender norms, household composition, poverty and girls’ agency) and influencing the time they have available for other activities. Gender norms are arguably the most significant driver of girls’ time use; experiences shared by the cohort girls demonstrate that children are socialised into gender roles from a very young age and because a gendered division of labour in the home is considered ‘normal’ or ‘natural’, the girls’ contributions in their homes are often minimised and not recognised as work. The girls’ stories also reveal that gender norms intersect

with household composition and poverty – these factors may influence the amount of care work is required in a household, but gender norms dictate the unequal and unfair ways that this work is divided among family members. However, agency is also a key driver of girls’ time use, and we can see that some of the cohort girls are motivated by a desire to develop knowledge and skills they need for their future and so prioritise how they split their time accordingly.

5.3 What is the impact of girls’ time use?

The way that the cohort girls decide (or are directed to) divide their day across these activities has direct implications for the time that they have available for other pursuits. For example, by spending eight hours doing unpaid care work per day, a girl may not also have time to do her homework or engage in skills-training activities that would prepare her for her future career ambitions. The way that the girls split their time also has consequences for their health and wellbeing: girls who are overloaded with numerous responsibilities and who report being time-poor also report having little time to socialise with friends, family and their wider communities to build important social networks; fewer hours for sleep and rest; and higher levels of stress. We can also see that the way that the cohort girls have split their time over their lives has some influence on the scale of their ambitions, the types of career aspirations they have, and their optimism for their futures. Girls who are supported to prioritise their education are more likely to aspire to attending university and having fulfilling careers; girls whose time has been dominated by unpaid care work or other unremunerated work can be seen to have lowered the scale of their ambitions over the years.

5.3.1 How girls' time use impacts their education

Negative impacts of unremunerated work and unpaid care responsibilities

High levels of unpaid care work can cause girls to miss school, be unable to complete their homework, fall behind in their lessons and perform poorly on tests, and ultimately drop out of school. Many of the girls in the Philippines struggle to prioritise their education and feel that their studies are suffering because of their unpaid care work. From the age of nine, Rubylyn has reported missing occasional days of school due to her care responsibilities. In 2016, Rubylyn shared that the reason that she had missed school recently was because *"my mum asked me to look after the baby [Rubylyn's brother], because she had to do the laundry."* Now aged 17, Rubylyn is in her penultimate year of school and balances this with about 4 hours of housework per day. Rubylyn says she prefers to spend her time studying but makes sure to do housework so that there will be *"no fighting"* at home. As a result of this, Rubylyn says that *"sometimes I don't pass [school tests]."*

In 2023, Mahalia – then aged 16 and also from the Philippines – shared that she is sometimes late to school due to her household chores that must be completed before she leaves, while Rosamie (aged 17 in 2023) said that she was tired because she was responsible for cooking for her family of seven and struggled to balance this with her studies. This year, Rosamie thinks that her studies have become more intensive because she is in the final year of school, and it is *"stressful"* trying to find time to study. She shares:

"I just worry about it. I'm really concerned about my studies; I just want to do all the activities on time."

– Rosamie, age 18 (2024), Philippines

Similarly, Michelle (Philippines) expressed in 2023 that, though she is attending school, she has no time for studying because her time is spent doing household chores. She explains that she is overwhelmed by her household responsibilities, saying:

"Of course, I regret it because instead of just studying, my time is divided between my chores at home."

– Michelle, age 16 (2023), the Philippines

The impact of girls' unpaid care work on their education does not appear to be recognised by their parents. Reyna's father (Philippines) estimates that household chores and cooking take up *"20%"* of Reyna's day; this would equate to a little under 5 hours. When asked what chores and care work Reyna performed, her father says, *"I don't know, but she also helps her sister"* – and when asked how much time Reyna spends taking care of siblings or other family members he reports, *"it's seldom"* – speculating that perhaps Reyna does this only on Saturdays and Sundays. By contrast, Reyna herself reports doing 11 hours per day on simultaneous care activities: she spends around 7 hours on chores and cooking, and about 4 hours taking care of her nephews, helping them with their homework and supervising them playing. Reyna reports only having time for 1 hour of homework per day, which she does at the same time as supervising her nephews and helping them with their own homework. The total amount of unpaid care work she performs represents 46 per cent of Reyna's 24-hour day; more than double her father's estimate. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Reyna had recently performed poorly on some school tests. Reyna's father shares that he was disappointed and could not understand why this had happened. Reyna herself remarks, *"it's not easy being a student and doing a lot at home."*

A leading reason that girls drop out of school early is because they are needed at home to care for young children, or for ill and older relatives.²¹⁹ In Benin, both Eleanor and Margaret were forced to drop out of school because of poor performances; in both cases, their parents failed to recognise that heavy care loads were significant contributing factors to the girls' poor performances. Eleanor dropped out of school in 2021; she had failed the fifth grade for a second time due to the distractions of housework and her mother wanted her to drop out of school at that point. While Eleanor's brother insisted that she continue with school, not long after this Eleanor ended up being forced to abandon her education.

“I ended up being expelled by the Headmistress because I couldn’t keep up”

– Eleanor, age 17 (2024), Benin

Eleanor’s mother frames the situation differently, saying “*it was [Eleanor] herself who chose not to continue with school*” (2024). This oversimplification of the situation suggests that Eleanor’s mother fails to recognise the impact that their daughter’s housework had on her ability to dedicate adequate time to her education.

Across the cohort, there are many other examples of how care work has impacted the girls’ education. In Brazil, Natalia has dropped down to attending school part time so that she can juggle her responsibilities caring for her older grandmother (Natalia is paid for this work). In 2024, Natalia shares that she believes that the greatest challenge facing girls in her community is that they are unable to finish their education, “*because often they stay at home to help their mothers.*” In Uganda, Miremba and Nimisha both say that they wished that they could spend less time cooking so that they could spend more time studying, while in Togo, Anti-Yara had to repeat a school year because housework made her late for school which impacted her grades.

“I used to have more time but now I have more household responsibilities because my brother and sister aren’t living here. I am always late for school as is evident because I had to retake my class.”

– Anti-Yara, age 15 (2021), Togo

The **unpaid care work associated with marriage and motherhood has a significant impact on educational attainment**. Aside from Griselda (Dominican Republic), all of the cohort girls who are mothers dropped out of school during their pregnancy and have not returned, however Griselda’s efforts to finish school were not without their challenges. Griselda initially dropped out in late 2019 when she was pregnant but was supported by her family to return to school a year later to repeat the grade that she failed. Griselda attended school on weekends until she graduated, and she now attends a university bridging course. Doris (El Salvador) dropped out of school when she became pregnant in 2022 and says in 2024 that it would be too difficult to return to her education “*because no one is going to look after the child*”. Melanie, in the Philippines, dropped out of school when she became pregnant in Grade 10 and although she wants to return to school to finish her education, she feels as though it is too difficult because her child is so young.

“I really want to study but there’s no one to take care of my child. I really want to finish senior high.”

– Melanie, age 17 (2024), Philippines

Box 6: How a build-up of care work over time impacts education – a case study

Through the experiences of the cohort girls the ways in which unpaid care work has built up over the course of their childhoods and impacted their educational journeys over time leading up to their abandonment of school altogether in favour of performing caring roles fulltime. Hillary, in El Salvador, has taken on more and more indirect and direct care responsibilities over the course of her childhood and, since she was 15 most of her time has been taken up on care responsibilities for her son. At 8 years old, Hillary carried water three times a day with her brother, and by the following year she was responsible for a lot of household chores and for taking care of her younger sister, which she enjoyed doing.

"I like to do chores around the house, I like to wash the dishes [...] I cook the food, I fry beans and eggs. I don't like cooking. When I'm not doing chores, I play [...] At my house I have to take care of my little sister, I'm the one that takes care of her."

– Hillary, age 9 (2015), El Salvador

By age 10, Hillary was independently going down to the river to wash the family's clothes, which her mother said that liked to do, and by 13 years of age, Hillary was taking time off school to help out around the house while her mother was pregnant.

"I sweep, I light the fire to make breakfast, sometimes we have dough in the fridge, and I take it out to make tortillas. I feed my siblings, my dad, my mum and then my sister and I go and wash the dishes and so on [...] Then I go to wash the corn for the mill for dinner or for lunch"

– Hillary, age 13 (2019), El Salvador

The following year, Hillary described how her care work has extended beyond her household. She had started to help with church events, making and serving cakes. A year later – when she was 15 years old - Hillary dropped out of school to get married, and described doing housework for her new mother-in-law, as well as continuing to care for her infant brother. Hillary became pregnant herself the same year and gave birth to a son in late 2021.

"Yes, it's like taking care of the baby, bathing him, dressing him, taking care of him, rocking him so that he sleeps enough. While he sleeps, I manage to do a lot of things around the house, in other words, the housework."

– Hillary, age 15 (2022), El Salvador

Now 17, Hillary reports doing around 11 hours of unpaid care work per day and earns money making and selling preserves. While she would like to return to school, and also to learn English, Hillary says that it would now be too difficult to return while she is breastfeeding, asking rhetorically, *"How am I going to do it?"*

Hillary's story highlights the urgent need for comprehensive sexuality education, access to sexual and reproductive health services, and for quality, accessible and affordable childcare, to allow for adolescent girls to complete their education.

The impact for some girls is profound: their time spent out of school since the birth of their children has caused them to lose skills and knowledge that they gained years earlier. Ayomide, in Togo, dropped out of school in 2021 because her family could no longer afford the school fees. She wanted to return to school, but later became pregnant and

now has a 2-year-old daughter and says this prevents her from re-enrolling. Ayomide is not happy about discontinuing her education and feels that she has lost important skills since dropping out.

“I’ve lost my grip on reading and other things. And when you see someone with a good job right now, its thanks to school. How can I get one by staying home and doing nothing?”

– Ayomide, age 17 (2024), Togo

This demonstrates that not only can girls time use impact the opportunities that they have to acquire new skills and knowledge through education or training, but it can also cause them to lose information that they had previously acquired due to lack of use or ability to put skills into practice.

Unpaid care work is not the only activity that impacts girls’ ability to excel at their studies and complete school. **Extended hours spent on remunerated or unremunerated work also has a critical impact on girls’ education.** In Cambodia, Reaksmey reported that work is the reason that she dropped out of school in grade 10. Reaksmey’s father died in 2022 and during the same period her mother broke her hand meaning that she was unable to work. Reaksmey said that she decided to pick mangos *“to help my family for income.”* Because she was working far away from home, Reaksmey missed the beginning of the school year and when she tried to return to classes the teacher said that she would need to repeat a grade. In 2024, Reaksmey reflects that *“after hearing that, I decided not to return to school”* because she did not want to be left behind her peers.

In the Philippines, unremunerated work on her family’s farm often forces Mahalia to miss days of school and fail to complete assignments – and this causes her a lot of anxiety. Mahalia explains that sometimes she tries to negotiate with her parents to only help on the farm in the morning so that she can attend school in the afternoon, however she feels that this work for her parents is essential, *“because life is hard. We have to work together”* (2024). Of her worries about her education, Mahalia shares:

“Sometimes, I can’t go to class because I help Mama and Papa at the farm [...] I’m worried that I might be unable to keep up with the class because I’m absent.”

– Mahalia, age 17 (2024), Philippines

The reality of navigating the demands of school, homework, chores, unremunerated work on family farms and care responsibilities means that girls’ time to learn is seriously compromised. It is not surprising that some of the girls experience poor academic performance and grade repetition. In turn, a lack of academic progress – particularly when the costs of school fees are already difficult for families to meet – is demonstrably discouraging girls from continuing with school, and their parents from supporting their education.

Using time to support education

On the other hand, the way that girls split their time also has the potential to support their educational attainment. Girls who are supported to prioritise their education and minimise the hours that they spend on unpaid care work and other activities report being able to spend more time on school attendance and homework. Annabelle in Benin has been supported by her parents to reduce her unpaid care responsibilities in favour of her studies. At first, Annabelle was allowed to drop her chores when she had classes, or to prioritise doing her homework first before doing tasks around the house. In 2022, she said *“[my schedule] only changes when I have homework at school; I drop my housework to attend school.”* By 2023, Annabelle had been able to significantly reduce her duties at home, saying:

“As far as my responsibilities are concerned, everything has changed because I have too many subjects to study to be able to do housework. I don’t do any housework; I do my studies.”

– Annabelle, age 16 (2023), Benin

Annabelle’s ability to split her time in such a way that supported her education meant she was able to graduate from high school; she now attends university in Cotonou and is studying midwifery. In 2024, Annabelle’s mother shares that the reason that her daughter had been able to reduce her level of housework was because *“she’s not the only one at home”* – prior to moving to Cotonou, Annabelle

lived with her mother and father (both employed fulltime) and her two younger brothers (aged 11 and 16 years). Annabelle's mother suggests that housework was shared between all family members. Annabelle's mother also reflects on why it was so important for her to allow her daughter to prioritise time for her education.

“Where I come from, we don't like girls going to school. For example, in my family, me and my older sister went to school but with the rumours in the village, our parents got discouraged and neglected our schooling. But my older sister was lucky enough to get her CEP^{jj} and I stopped at CE1.^{kk} That left a void in me today. If we were boys, our parents weren't going to leave us because of the rumours in our village [...] If I could change anything, I would advise and encourage girls to go to school.”

– Annabelle's mother, 2024, Benin

Annabelle's story demonstrates **the importance of an enabling environment for girls to be able to manage their time-use**. Annabelle's parents share the cooking in the home – challenging prevailing gender norms about unpaid care in Benin. Her mother is also supportive of her daughter's education and wishes that gendered social norms about girls' and boys' education in her village had not deprived her of the same opportunities. As a result, Annabelle was supported to dedicate the majority of time to her education, limiting her unpaid care work to allow her to study; she is now the only girl in the Benin cohort who has graduated from secondary school and progressed to university.

Like Annabelle, a number of the cohort girls in Vietnam have been supported by their parents to reduce their care responsibilities in favour of spending more of their time on their studies. At the age of 12, Sen's mother reported that *“it is equal in my house”* between the males and females, sharing that when she is at work her husband does the housework, and when he is at work, she does these tasks. This trend continued for Sen – over the

following years she described an even split of chores, homework, private tutoring, and leisure time – including playing sport. At age 16, she said, *“I mainly go to school,”* but also mentioned that she wanted to spend more time on homework and studying. In 2024, now 17 years old, Sen explains she has been able to achieve this goal, saying she is doing *“more study time than last year.”* Sen currently reports doing no unpaid care work, and instead spends 13 hours per day on her education; her goal is to go to university in the city to study economics.

“I study at school every morning from Monday to Saturday. In addition, there are also some extra classes.”

– Sen, age 18 (2024), Vietnam

Reflecting on the caregivers' division of unpaid care labour in Vietnam (explored in Section 5.2.1), we can observe how girls' time use is shaped by household dynamics. In the Vietnamese cohort, a more equal division of care work between mothers and fathers appears to have powerful implications for the role that girls are expected to play in the home – and consequently, the priority they are able to give to other activities like their education.

Many of the Vietnamese cohort also report that their parents have discouraged them from taking on paid work in order to ensure they can prioritise their schoolwork; indeed, of the eight cohort girls in Vietnam only two are engaged in income generating activities: Yen occasionally sells clothes online, and Ly works in a café during school holidays. However, despite having lower levels of economic participation and unpaid care responsibilities relative to the rest of the cohort, the girls in Vietnam report being incredibly time-poor and feeling over-stretched because of the number of hours that they dedicate to their studies. In 2024, Tan describes her study routine, which is representative of many of the other Vietnamese girls' schedules:

^{jj} Benin primary school exit certificate.

^{kk} Third year of primary school in Benin.

“Sometimes I don’t have an extra class I can leave early and then I learn a little bit I go to bed early. There are also times when I study until 4 o’clock, I go home, I eat, drink, clean myself, then at 9 and a half, I study until 11 o’clock and then I study online [...] I also feel pressure, now there are only 3 months left to study for the exam.”

– Tan, age 17 (2024), Vietnam

Many of the girls in Vietnam have additional classes on the weekends and late in the evenings, and they spend an average of 11 hours per day on their education. While it is a positive thing that these girls are supported and encouraged by their parents to prioritise their studies and graduate from school, there are also deleterious impacts of this time-use: the girls in Vietnam report having very little time for rest and leisure, which has negative effects on their wellbeing.

5.3.2 Impact on development of vocational skills and planning for the future

As the cohort girls reach the age of 18, many are transitioning from secondary school to their next steps – whether that be higher education or the world of work. Some of the cohort girls report being able to dedicate time to **develop skills, undertake vocational training, and take on remunerated work that supports their economic independence**. In Cambodia, Kannitha has taken on paid work in her sister’s salon, and she also continues to do the agricultural work that she started in 2023. While Kannitha originally took on this work in order to help contribute to the household income and support her studies, she said that taking on paid work has helped her to develop valuable skills that will be helpful for her future:

“I learn about time management between working and studying. Furthermore, I manage my income for my study too.”

– Kannitha, age 16 (2023), Cambodia

Similarly, Bopha, Mony and Nakry (all in Cambodia) also say that they have learned financial and time management skills from taking on part time jobs and balancing this with their education. In Togo, Djoumai dropped out of school two years ago (at age 15) because she “*wanted to learn a trade*” (2024) – and she is now enrolled in a fashion design course and seamstress apprenticeship. When she first started her training, Djoumai said that she was “*happy because I’m better at sewing than I was in school*” (2022), and now two years later she says that she likes the income that comes with the traineeship, and the independence that this affords her. Her course runs six days per week, for 8 hours per day, and Djoumai reports doing an additional 6 hours of unpaid care work on top of this – predominately taking care of her young cousins. Djoumai’s goal is to finish learning fashion design and travel abroad to work; and when asked if she felt that she had enough time to plan for her future and work towards her goals, Djoumai replies, “*Yes. At the workshop, I work twice as hard to learn properly*” (2024).

A number of the cohort girls in LAC also report having time to plan for their futures and take concrete steps towards developing the skills they need. In Brazil, Camila said that she is able to make time during her schedule to reflect on her future and her goals, saying: “*I usually stop, get my notebook, write my dreams down, think a little*” (2024). In El Salvador, Gabriela has developed a clear roadmap for her future. For the last two years she has been studying hard at school and doing more homework than in the past so that she can go to university; she wants to study International Relations and English so that she can become a translator or work in foreign relations.

“I want to study international relations [which is about] foreign relations [and] has to do with language... knowing English you get some of the jobs that there are here in El Salvador and a good salary. [I could] serve as a translator for people also because there are people who come here and don’t know Spanish and they want the same from other countries [for workers] to know a second, third language.”

– Gabriela, age 16 (2023), El Salvador

When *Real Choices, Real Lives* spoke to Gabriela this year, she reports that she had started taking English classes on Saturday mornings – which last 4 hours – in order to help her achieve her future goals; she is in her final year of secondary school and tries to do 4 hours of homework per day. Gabriela balances her time with 6 hours of unpaid care work per day, and although she thinks that she mostly has enough time for everything she would prefer it if she had more time to study English.

Other girls in the cohort, however, feel that they do not have sufficient time to take on paid work or to develop skills for their futures. Like Djoumai, Nini-Rike also lives in Togo and is undertaking a tailoring apprenticeship. Nini-Rike spends 7 hours per day at her tailoring workshop, but also must balance this with working in the fields during the harvest season to fund her apprenticeship and contribute to the household income. Additionally, Nini-Rike performs about 7 hours of unpaid care work per day – she wakes up at 3am every day to prepare porridge and cakes for her mother, and then helps her little brother get ready for school. When asked about how she splits her time, Nini-Rike responds:

“I want to spend less time on housework and more time on my workshop [because I want] to master sewing.”

– Nini-Rike, age 17 (2024), Togo

Nini-Rike aims to one day open her own tailoring workshop and be “a great dressmaker”; she believes that “if I try hard tomorrow, I’ll be free and that makes me happy” however she is worried that she does not have the time to develop her sewing technique. Similarly, Namazzi in Uganda is concerned that she is not able to dedicate enough time to building her tailoring skills. In 2024, Namazzi reports that she has completed the first level of tailoring; she wants to study the second level, “so that I can learn more skills” but does not have the time, because she does 5 hours of unremunerated work digging and 13 hours of unpaid care work per day.¹¹ Namazzi’s care work involves cooking for her family, cleaning, and taking care of her 4-year-old niece. Although she tries to practice tailoring

privately, Namazzi said that she feels “bad” that her tailoring skills are not developing faster, saying:

“I feel bad because sometimes my customers need something like a design that I have no idea about but if I was at school I could be able to learn about it.”

– Namazzi, age 17 (2024), Uganda

Some of the **girls who are mothers report that their unpaid care responsibilities prevent them from taking on paid work** outside the home; this is the situation for Katerin (Dominican Republic), whose story was shared in Section 5.2.1. This again highlights the need for accessible childcare services, as this is a demonstrable barrier to girls’ equal economic participation. In many of the *Real Choices, Real Lives* focal countries we can see that the girls’ unpaid care responsibilities have increased significantly over the course of their lives, and this trajectory has led to them being deprived of opportunities for economic empowerment.

5.3.3 Impact on leisure and social networks

Many of the girls in the cohort are extremely time poor. Studies show that individuals are more likely to compensate for increased time spent on work and education with less sleep or leisure time, rather than with less childcare or housework.²²⁰ For the cohort girls, **many appear to be sacrificing their hobbies, socialising with friends and family and time spent participating in community life**. While the majority of the girls in the cohort say that they have some time in the day for leisure activities, 12 girls report having no time for hobbies or socialising, and a further 12 say they only have one hour per day for this. Ayomide (Togo), who juggles paid work at a market stall with caring for her daughter, summarises the impacts of time-poverty on her life, and on her ability to benefit from her social networks:

¹¹ Some of Namazzi’s activities are conducted simultaneously.

“I want to have more time to look for money and also to chat with friends and give each other advice. I’d also like to have more time to be with my family, to help my grandparents more, and get their advice too.”

– Ayomide, age 17 (2024), Togo

In Benin, Annabelle (who is studying midwifery at university) says that she does not have time for leisure or socialising *“because my studies come first.”* She reports that when she gets back from her classes, she stays *“locked up in my room to study.”* Annabelle explains that she will have time for leisure activities and hobbies after she has completed her studies in a couple of years. In Vietnam, most of the girls report that between school, private lessons in the evenings and on weekends, homework, their chores, and spending time with family they do not have for hobbies. For a few girls, including Yen and Ly, their only free time is spent watching television because they are too tired to play sports or games. Similarly, Kannitha (Cambodia), Namazzi (Uganda) and Bessy (El Salvador) have all shared over the years that they no longer have time for hobbies.

“I used to play most times, but I now play less and do more house chores like cooking and washing.”

– Namazzi, age 13 (2020), Uganda

Leisure time is essential for mental health and wellbeing. Over the last year, Juliana’s grandmother, Hellen^{mm} (Brazil) has been very worried about her granddaughter, saying in 2024 that *“her personality has changed a lot, she’s more closed off”* and rarely goes out anymore. Juliana’s grandfather, Hellen’s husband, suffers from alcoholism, which Hellen says is *“very hard”* because he often comes home drunk and *“gets abusive.”* There is a lot of violence and fighting in the home, which her grandmother thinks has *“really affects her [Juliana’s] mental state”*. Football is Juliana’s release and escape; she plays games with friends after school and when she is not doing

unremunerated work helping her grandmother pack and sell snacks from a cart. Notably, Juliana has played sports since she was young – which her grandmother has historically been disapproving of, saying when Juliana was 10:

“Look, I’m like an observer. I never liked that she had many friends, that she played with boys.”

– Hellen (Juliana’s grandmother), 2017, Brazil

Now, with Juliana suffering from what her grandmother thinks is *“the beginning of depression”*, Hellen recognises that *“when she’s with her friends, playing ball, she lets go. She has fun”*. Hellen now supports and encourages Juliana to make time to play and said that Juliana’s hobby is *“something I won’t take away from her.”* Juliana herself shares this year, *“what makes me happy is just playing [football].”* Juliana’s story demonstrates the importance of hobbies and leisure time in promoting wellbeing and safeguarding girls’ mental health: football is Juliana’s outlet that allows her to ‘let go’ and relax. Across the cohort, the girls in Brazil report having the most time for leisure activities; they appear to be supported by their caregivers to prioritise having fun in order to safeguard their wellbeing.

A number of the girls also report that time poverty is having a **damaging effect on their ability to nurture and invest in their friendships**. In the Philippines, Jasmine’s overloaded schedule means that she must spend much of her day multi-tasking – she juggles unremunerated work on her family farm, and chores, and tries to keep up with her studies while she takes a temporary break from school. She describes the impact of this:

“I do everything at the same time... It’s sad because I can’t do things I like, like bonding with my friends. I rarely do that.”

– Jasmine, age 18 (2024), Philippines

Davy, in Cambodia, also must balance numerous responsibilities. She attends school and does homework, helps her mother on the farm, takes

^{mm} Name changed.

care of her 2-year-old nephew, and performs chores. Davy has three brothers – two of whom are also at secondary school (aged 14 and 16 years) and in 2023 she reported that their time use doesn't look like hers: she is more overloaded. Not only do her brothers spend less time studying, they also do not do any unpaid care work, which for Davy takes up 4 hours of her daily routine.

“I have enough time to study English and do more housework. The [amount of] time that I am with my family is fine too, but I don't have much time to meet my friends... Some of my male relatives do not do any housework and don't study hard too”

– Davy, age 16 (2023), Cambodia

Fezire, in Togo, left junior high in 2023 because she wanted to learn a trade. Unfortunately, the family was unable to afford the cost of enrolment, with Fezire's mother saying in 2024, “*we haven't found the money to put her in an apprenticeship*” due to family health expenses. Fezire now spends 3 hours per day on paid work at a market stall, and 13 hours on simultaneous unpaid care tasks at home. Fezire wishes she could spend less time on chores, and she also feels “*lonely*” because she no longer sees her friends as they are at school. She used to play football, which she enjoyed, but said she cannot do this anymore because it was a school club. Other girls in the cohort also shared their feelings of loneliness and regret that they no longer have time to see friends:

“I no longer have any friends. I don't have enough time to make friends.”

– Layla, age 17 (2024), Benin

“It's a big change compared to previous years. Right now, I can't walk around and talk to my friends. I'm busy now with my school assignments and taking care of my nieces and nephews.”

– Reyna, age 16 (2023), Philippines

Equally as important as friendships is girls' ability to participate in community activities and contribute to civic life. Through this participation, not only do girls develop friendships and social networks, but they establish important relationships and contacts that serve them as they build their careers. Participating in society also establishes the foundations for girls to contribute to decision-making and to become leaders in their communities. There are many community activities that Reine (Togo) says she would like to be involved in:

“There's the book club, every Saturday they go to [a neighbouring village] for the reading competition, and there's the football club. I also want to go to choir and catechesis classes.”

– Reine, age 17 (2024), Togo

However, Reine explains that “*there's no time*” for her to take part in these activities because of her chores and homework. Reine spends 6 hours after school doing unpaid care work, mostly collecting water and taking care of her little brothers and older grandfather. She also works on a farm sowing maize and soya to afford money for her school supplies, including uniforms and notebooks. Similarly, Leyla in the Dominican Republic would like to take part in a local youth group but says it isn't possible for her right now because she cares for her younger brothers during the week.

“Because I'm responsible for the boys, so I'm not going out or getting involved in anything right now.”

– Leyla, age 18 (2024), Dominican Republic

In Cambodia, Leakhena's mother said that a key barrier to her daughter taking part in community activities is that she does not have the time to explore options of groups that she could possibly join. Leakhena spends more than 11 hours per day on her education – either at school or doing homework; she also helps her mother with her business and does household chores.

“She doesn’t have enough time for those as she is spending time almost for the studying at school and at home also at the weekend she never goes anywhere far from house and as well as no information to join the social development activities.”

– Leakhena’s mother, 2024, Cambodia

Similarly, many of the girls in the Dominican Republic and El Salvador do not know what activities that they would like to take part in if they had the time, or said that they weren’t aware of any community activities that they could participate in. This suggests a lack of access to leisure opportunities – as well as perhaps a lack of time available to them to seek out such opportunities.

Again, it is the girls in Brazil who report having the most time to participate in community life. Sofia is involved with a youth group in her church, which she enjoys, and Fernanda and Larissa are both members of local football clubs. Camila thinks it is important for girls and women to get involved in community activities and groups *“because men already have more opportunities than women”* (2024). Fernanda thinks it is *“cool”* to see women leading community activities and making decisions, because *“we usually see more men participating in these groups, right?”* (2024), while Bianca believes that women need to participate in the community to make sure they are *“in the middle of important decisions”* (2024). For the girls in Brazil, participating in community activities gives them exposure to positive role models; Bianca says the kind of women she wants to be is based on strong women around her.

“I’d like to be a strong, determined person, who doesn’t give up on her dreams, who persists until she gets what she wants.”

– Bianca, age 17 (2024), Brazil

5.3.4 Impact on rest, health and wellbeing

A common refrain among the cohort girls is that they wish that they had more time to rest. In the Philippines, Reyna is extremely time poor. When she isn’t at school or doing her year-long research assignment, she is taking care of her nephews and doing chores while her sister and brother-in-law work. On the weekends, she either studies or visits her parents – and when she is there, she helps them on their farm. Reyna described her routine as follows:

“Now that I live with my sister during school days, I do a lot of house chores there and help take care of my nieces and nephews. There are also a lot of requirements in school because we are doing research now. That’s almost all the changes. When I came home on Saturdays and Sundays, I help in the fields or do things my father asked me to do. But it depends because there are weekends when I can’t go home because I’m busy with school.”

– Reyna, age 17 (2024), the Philippines

Reyna thinks that *“doing a lot is natural”* – a statement that reflects an internalised norm about girls and women’s roles and responsibilities. However, she acknowledges that it is fatiguing when she must juggle multiple tasks and responsibilities simultaneously, saying *“my brain and body tire”* (2024). Reyna reports having no time for rest or leisure activities, but she tries to persevere sharing, *“when I’m tired, I just think about why I’m doing it”* – her motivation is to try to lift her family out of poverty.

“I just feel that I’m old enough and I need to let go or postpone such plans [like socializing with friends] so that I can do my chores at home or help my mother and father with their chores.”

– Reyna, age 17 (2024), Philippines

In Vietnam, Huong says that she wishes that she had *“more time to sleep, spend more with my family, and study a little less.”* She spends 6 hours a day at school and a further 5 hours doing homework and studying but said she struggles to keep on top of her workload, and asked jokingly, *“why does life keep drowning me?”* (2024). Huong tries to alleviate stress by playing video games late at night, which is something she has done for the last few years; however, this means that she goes to bed around 1am and gets only about 4 hours of sleep

Stress is another common complaint shared by the girls. In the Dominican Republic, Nicol shares that she had lost a lot of weight over the last year because she had recently lost her appetite, saying *“sometimes I don’t feel like eating”* (2024). Nicol describes the cause of her loss of appetite, saying *“stress, like too many classes, and too much work to do”* (2024). Like Nicol, Rosamie (Philippines) has lost weight in the last year which she puts down to her busy overloaded schedule, explaining *“there are a lot of activities at school. I’m busy doing a lot, so maybe that’s why I lost weight.”* Rosamie attends school for 8 hours a day, then studies and does homework for a further three hours in the evening. At the same time as doing homework, Rosamie does chores including cooking dinner for her family and doing the laundry and supervises her 4-year-old nephew; overall she does 5 hours of unpaid care work per day. Rosamie reflects in 2024 her workload is *“stressful.”*

Darna (Philippines) also struggles with stress. Her living situation – in a boarding house with her brother - can be quite *“noisy and chaotic”* which makes it hard for Darna to concentrate on her studies. She says she would like *“a peaceful situation and place to maximize my time”*. Darna does all of the housework in the place she shares with her brother, which is extremely taxing on her time which causes her anxiety. Darna describes the pressures on her time:

“I wish I had time to refresh myself [she laughs], not just stress [...] I should be studying by [8pm], I think I can’t rest yet because I have a lot to do. It’s also hard because I don’t have time when I’m at school to do the activities. I’m cramming when I’m at home because there’s a lot of

house chores to do [...] [I am] sometimes really cramming because when I get home, I can’t concentrate because of household chores, especially when the laundry is piled up.”

– Darna, age 18 (2024), the Philippines

For Katerin and Griselda in the Dominican Republic, the demands of motherhood means they have very little time to care of themselves, reporting little time to eat and exercise.

“I have to make breakfast for my little boy, not for me, because I wasn’t having anything, and sometimes I wouldn’t eat for the whole day because I couldn’t stop to do it. But now I have to make dinner for the children, lunch and dinner.”

– Katerin, age 18 (2024), Dominican Republic

Griselda says she wishes that she had more time *“to take care of myself”* and do things like *“go to the gym.”*

Stress and a lack of time for personal care also has other impacts on the girls’ health and wellbeing. In the Philippines, Christine reported in 2022 that her parents had reduced her household chores because she fainted after doing two basins of laundry. Since this incident, when Christine gets tired her chest tightens so her family makes sure she doesn’t get too tired anymore. In 2023 she said, *“I’m in-charge of the kitchen, like cooking. No more heavy work.”* Also in the Philippines, Chesa’s mother reports in 2024 that her daughter *“hadn’t had her period for five months”* and a doctor said that *“maybe she’s just depressed from studying and stressed.”*

Overall, the way that the cohort girls are spending their time is having a variety of impacts on their lives. For some girls, their unpaid care workloads mean that they were forced to drop out of school or feel that it would be too difficult to return to their education after leaving school for other reasons. For other girls, their care work means that they have insufficient time to study, or to develop skills that they feel they need for their futures – like

undertaking apprenticeships. Time poverty is also having a significant impact on the girls' opportunities to socialise and participate in community life, and their ability to enjoy hobbies and leisure activities. Many girls also report not having sufficient time for rest and are struggling with high levels of stress that impact their wellbeing. Not only does this compromise girls' health and wellbeing, but it also deprives them of opportunities to build social networks, participate in community life, and develop leadership skills.

5.4 Girls aspirations: time use, agency and decision-making

The cohort girls' experiences highlight the relationship between time use and aspirations. The aspirations of the cohort girls provide us not only with an insight into how they imagine their futures, but also to a sense of what opportunities and constraints that the girls perceive around them. A notable influence on this perception of feasibility is time use. Girls who have been forced to abandon their education due to high levels of unpaid care work tend to have reduced the scale of their ambitions in response to their perception of what is now feasible and achievable. This not only reveals how girls' time use influences aspirations, but also reveals how the way that girls split their time impacts their gender beliefs about what roles 'should' be held by women and men. Over the years - as detailed in Section 5.2.1 - the girls have expressed gendered beliefs about girls' and women's roles in the home and in society – which mirror the way that they and their mothers spend their time. Many of the girls have aspired to careers in care professions at different points in their lives – which reflects their discernment that jobs in the care industry are attainable and acceptable. The judgement of what career paths are open to girls is also based on the role models that they observe in their communities. Aspiring to careers in care professions therefore becomes a demonstration of girls' tactical agency – which is defined as the calculated and time-bound decisions and actions taken in response to limited or chance offerings.²²¹

On the other hand, we also see girls in the cohort whose aspirations drive and define how they divide their time. Through their aspirations, we can see girls' agency manifested as they make active

choices in how they spend their time in support of achieving their goals.²²² A common example in the cohort is girls making an active decision to dedicate the majority of their time to their studies (which they see as pathways to achieving their goals) and consequently reducing the time they spend on unpaid care work, paid employment, or leisure activities.

5.4.1 Gender norms, role models & the pursuit of care professions

Most of the cohort girls have - at one time or another - aspired to a career in a care profession, including as nurses, midwives, other healthcare occupations, or as teachers. Azia, in Togo, would like to be a district nurse – and identifies a nurse in her community whom she thinks of as a role model and someone she wants to be like in the future. Azia's aspirations have remained the same for her most of her adolescence; when she was 15 years old she shared that she wanted to *"look after sick people and look after my family"* (2021), and by age 16 this had developed into a vision to improve healthcare at a national level by becoming the Minister of Health, saying: *"[I wish] to help and care for people in my community and country"* (2022). By age 18, however, Azia's dreams have returned to nursing, and she shares, *"I always wanted to be a nurse after my baccalaureate"* (2024). Azia's aspirations are echoed by many other girls in the cohort at different stages in their lives:

"I want to be a nurse [...] to be able to help other people."

– Jasmine, age 14 (2020), Philippines

"If I do well at school, I can become a midwife, that's my dream."

- Fezire, age 17 (2023), Togo

From the quotes above we can see some common threads emerging. Care professions are associated with helping others – which was a key gendered virtue instilled in the girls over the years through

their unpaid care responsibilities. In this way, we can see the influence of gender norms in shaping girls' aspirations. **The time that they have spent on care activities over the course of their childhoods - activities which are deemed virtuous – has influenced a perception of what is an appropriate and acceptable career path for a woman.**

The girls' experiences also illustrate the normative influence of role models in shaping girls' aspirations. Nakry, in Cambodia, is another example of this. From the age of 6, Nakry has expressed a desire to have a career like teaching through which she can *"help others"* (2013); and at 10 years old she shared her belief that 'good girls' are helpful to their mothers and do chores. In 2021, Nakry demonstrated an in-depth awareness of her aunt's responsibilities and duties as a primary school teacher and expressed a wish to follow in her footsteps.

"I would like to be a teacher (as my aunty) to share knowledge with the younger generation. She can teach extra classes at night from 5 pm to 6 pm for grade 2 to 6 students."

– Nakry, age 14 (2021), Cambodia

Though Nakry went on to specify a number of other jobs she would be happy to do (including being a healthcare worker), all of her stated options for the future were informed by examples of what she saw in her village. Nakry's aspirations are therefore demonstrably shaped by role models in her community who are leading the kind of life she would like to have, and whose pathways to their careers are imitable. It can be assumed that girls like Nakry have made a judgement that the **role models around them had access to the same resources and opportunities that they themselves do, making these aspirations achievable and feasible for them.**

Nakry's ambitions have also influenced her time use over the latter part of her adolescence. In 2021, Nakry identified that *"girls can find jobs and continue the study to have bright future"* – but also, importantly, *"to get jobs, girls have to study"* (2021). Consequently, Nakry has made a concerted effort to

focus on her education. In 2023, she reported that she would get up early in the morning to review her lessons before school, and in 2024 shares that she had reduced the time that she spends on housework in order to dedicate more time to studying. Through Nakry's story we can see the interplay between gender norms and unpaid care work, aspirations, agency and time use. Gender norms and time spent on unpaid care work as a child have influenced Nakry's perception that caring professions like teaching allow her to be helpful to others, which is something that she has internalised as a positive value. Her aspiration to become a teacher has then shaped the decisions that Nakry has made about her time use to ensure that she is able to devote enough attention to her education to ensure that she achieves her goals. Nakry reports in 2024 that she is now dedicating more time to her studies and does extra revision on the weekend, and her mother shares that Nakry *"tries to learn more than before. I see her regularly reading at home"* (2024).

Dariana (Dominican Republic) also demonstrates the importance of role models in influencing what career paths and aspirations appear feasible; however, a notable difference in Dariana's experience is that she has not conformed to gendered norms about careers for women. Dariana has had high hopes for her future since a young age. In 2013, at age 7, Dariana aspired to be a doctor, and at the age of 9, she explained *"I wanna be a doctor because I like to care for people that are sick"* (2015). By 2022, at age 16, Dariana's goal had changed – and she aimed to become a chemical engineer. In 2024, Dariana reflected on the origins of this goal, saying:

"Well, I became interested in chemistry because I realised that I liked inventing chemical things [...] I always liked inventing so-called facials with the creams, mixing them together with other products, etc., etc."

– Dariana, age 18 (2024), Dominican Republic

Dariana had been introduced to chemical engineering by her father's cousin (whom Dariana refers to as her aunt), who studied chemical

engineering and specialised in developing cleaning products. Dariana calls her aunt her role model because she studied at university *“without her parents’ help”* (2024) and made her own career - and Dariana admires her independence. Now 18 years old, Dariana has graduated from secondary school and has moved in with this aunt in Santo Domingo. Dariana is undertaking an English immersion course while she waits for bureaucratic processes relating to her national identification card to be resolved to allow her to enrol in a chemical engineering degree.

5.4.2 Enabling environments & caregiver support

Over the years, we can also see the positive influence of Dariana’s environment that enabled her to prioritise her education and believe that her goals for the future were achievable. In 2017, Dariana’s mother reported that she did not expect Dariana – then aged 11 - to do housework after school and instead could spend time doing her homework or resting; she was only expected to do chores on the weekend. Later, in 2019, her mother spoke about her hopes for Dariana’s future, saying:

“She has to try to improve herself, she sees how we live, what our situation is, I want to see an improvement, I want her to study, I want her to succeed, I want her to become a professional.”

– Dariana’s mother, 2019, Dominican Republic

In 2023, Dariana said that her father supported her goal to study chemical engineering, reporting that *“[he] says that if I like it and if that’s what I want to study, I should study that.”* From Dariana’s story, we can observe a relationship between aspirations, agency and time-use. Over the years, Dariana has made agentic decisions about her time use that support her ambitions – she has devoted more time to her studies, spent less time on chores, chosen to live with her role model, and persisted with pursuing her chosen university course in the face of administrative obstacles. We can also see how Dariana’s environment – namely, the support of her parents, and the presence of a woman in her life

who has inspired her – have contributed to Dariana’s belief that her aspirations are feasible. In turn, this sense of achievability about her ambitions reinforced and reproduced Dariana’s agentic decisions about her time-use.

In Benin, Annabelle can similarly be seen to demonstrate agency in the pursuit of her aspirations. At the age of 11 Annabelle said that her parents hoped for her to be a *“great doctor”* (2018) or a midwife – a dream that she also shared; and by the following year she had decided that she was interested in midwifery specifically. Annabelle has maintained this interest, and she is now enrolled in a university course studying to become a midwife.

“I’d like to be a midwife, because I want to help women and know how childbirth happens. There is also a shortage of midwives in Benin.”

– Annabelle, age 17 (2024) Benin

Annabelle’s mother’s dreams for her daughter are lofty – she wants Annabelle to *“go on and get her doctorate”* and said, *“if Annabelle wants to do something, she does it with passion and commitment”* (2024). Over the years, Annabelle’s parents have supported their goals and created an enabling environment for her to aspire to further studies and a career. In 2013, Annabelle’s mother shared that she and her husband share the responsibility for preparing meals in the home, and in 2017 Annabelle reported that her parents do not have different expectations of boys and girls in her household. By 2020, at age 13, Annabelle was being supported by her parents to scale back her unpaid care responsibilities – and only did chores on the weekend. This arrangement remained in place for the rest of Annabelle’s time at secondary school:

“[My schedule] only changes when I have homework at school; I drop my housework to attend school.”

– Annabelle, age 15 (2022), Benin

“I have too many subjects to study to be able to do housework. I don’t do any housework; I do my studies.”

– Annabelle, age 16 (2023), Benin

Now living with her sister in Cotonou and enrolled in her midwifery course fulltime, we can see that the time that Annabelle has dedicated to her studies over the years have supported the achievement of her goals. The support that Annabelle’s parents have given her to make decisions on her own has led to Annabelle’s strong sense of independence, faith in her abilities, and sense that if she works hard then her goals are achievable. When asked to reflect on her busy schedule over the years, Annabelle says *“as my goal was achieved, I’m happy with my results and I don’t remember all the difficulties I went through”* (2024).

In Vietnam, Tan’s experience also demonstrates the importance of parental attitudes in influencing girls’ perspectives of gender equality and the opportunities available to women. Tan’s mother, Phuong,ⁿⁿ believes that women and men should be *“very equal.”* In 2024, she described the division of labour in her home as follows:

“If I go to work, my husband stays at home with cooking. He took care of everything, and when I came home from work at night only to eat and then shower and go to bed.”

– Tan’s mother, 2024, Vietnam

Phuong’s attitude and her parents’ behaviour in sharing the responsibilities for housework depending on paid work commitments have arguably had an influence on Tan’s views on gender equality. During her interview in 2024, a vignette on gender norms and economic empowerment was shared with Tan.^{oo} In this story, members of a community discourage an adolescent girl from pursuing a career in agriculture due to traditional ideas of gender roles. Responding to this, Tan says:

“I think now that it’s changed, women can do more like men, they can do more than men. Women now have many financially independent people who are not dependent. So, I think some of people think that way and some of people will think in old-fashioned way, not keeping up with the level of culture now. I think those guys think the old way and [the girl in the vignette] thinks positively. Self-change is ultimately about changing one’s own life.”

– Tan, age 17 (2024), Vietnam

Tan’s powerful words about gender equality and agency are reflected in her own time use and pursuit of her goals. Tan aspires to studying economics at university and works towards this goal by spending roughly 12 hours per day at school and doing homework. She attends extra classes on Saturday afternoons, and reports spending all day on Sunday studying independently. Her parents support Tan to prioritise her studies; Phuong has directed Tan’s younger siblings to take over cooking rice so that Tan can dedicate more time to homework.

Through Tan and Annabelle’s stories we can see **the significant influence of parental support in the creating an enabling environment for girls to define their time use** in a way that supports them to pursue their aspirations. Taking together the experiences of Azia, Nakry, Dariana, and Annabelle we can understand that many different factors shape the cohort girls’ sense of what opportunities are available to them, and what aspirations are feasible. Their stories highlight the important function that roles models play in setting examples for girls of what career paths are available to them, the need for parental support to create an enabling environment for girls to prioritise their education and skills development, and the necessity for girls to have agency to make decisions about their time use.

ⁿⁿ Name changed.

^{oo} This vignette is included in full in Annex 3.

5.4.3 Unleashing girls' ambitions

Unfortunately, not all girls are provided with the support they need to achieve their aspirations. Through the experiences of the cohort girls, we can see that girls who do not have an enabling environment in which to make decisions about their own time use tend to take on more and more unpaid care work over the years and demonstrate making fewer agentic decisions to support their future plans.

In Uganda, Rebecca (18) dropped out of school at the beginning of 2024 due to an inability to afford the school fees; she said she used to get sent home for fees regularly before she left for good, and her mother had been encouraging her to drop out since 2021. After she left school, Rebecca had initially enrolled in a hairdressing course –but again was forced to drop out of this training programme because she couldn't afford the monthly fees.

In 2024, Rebecca's mother, Faith,^{PP} reports being very concerned about Rebecca mixing with boys and becoming pregnant, saying *"when it comes to girls at that age you can't tell what she does when you are not with her."* Because of this, Faith keeps her daughter close to home and monitors her activities and who she socialises with. Although she thinks that girls should be allowed to make their own decisions, Faith believes that these decisions should be *"regulated by their parents"*, saying *"when you leave [young people] with a lot of freedom they end up misusing it."* Now, Rebecca says that she is *"just seated home,"* and spends around 11 hours of her day on simultaneous unpaid care tasks including collecting firewood, fetching water, caring for her younger siblings, preparing meals for the family and cleaning the house.

When Rebecca isn't doing work in the house, her mother has her dig in the garden. Rebecca does not like this work, and thinks it makes her *"shabby,"* however she has little control over her daily routine and said that her day is dictated by *"both my parents [...] they decide for me how my day should be like"* (2024). When asked if Rebecca has time for rest and leisure, Faith specified that, *"she can rest after her work from 2:00pm or 3:00 pm depending on how fast she completed her work."* In 2024, Rebecca hopes to one day open her own hair salon

and said that she sometimes practices plaiting her relatives' hair, however her aspiration as a child was to be a nurse (at age 11), and then later to be a lawyer (age 15).

Like Rebecca, Margaret's (Benin) ambitions over the years have also been shaped by influences in her environment including her parent's expectations for her future, the availability of funds to cover school and training fees, and the time she has had to dedicate to unpaid care work. Margaret has been doing chores around the house since she was 5 years old; at that age, she was responsible for sweeping some of the rooms in her house. By age 10, Margaret was responsible for collecting water for the household, and cleaning dishes – and she had noticed gendered inequality in the division of chores in her household. While the girls in her family were required to collect water, boys of the same age were considered too young and were allowed more free time. Margaret remarked that year: *"boys are often allowed to play more than girls"* (2016).

By 12 years of age, Margaret had begun sharing many of the household tasks with her mother – she helped her mother with cooking, accompanied her to the market and continued to collect water and clean in the house. A year later, at age 13, Margaret's was living with her paternal aunt, who remarked that she was trying to ensure that Margaret was prepared to be a *"good wife for later on."* By the time she was 16 years old, Margaret was five years behind at school and had dropped out because of her household duties.

"[I dropped out] because I don't find time at home to learn my lessons. When I come back from school, my aunt gives me too much housework to do; she tells me to fetch water, cook, that's why I decided to drop out of school."

– Margaret, age 16 (2022), Benin

Now 18 years of age, Margaret is working 12 hours per day helping her aunt to sell cosmetics and working in the fields; she does not receive an income for this work. Growing up, Margaret wanted to be a police officer, and later a nurse. Now,

^{PP} Name changed.

Margaret wants to learn sewing – she would like to do a dressmaking apprenticeship but doesn't know when she will be able to start learning. Margaret shares her disappointment with how she spends her time these days:

“Today, it hurts because I dropped out of school because I thought that if I dropped out, they would immediately put me into an apprenticeship, but that's no longer the case.”

– Margaret, age 18 (2024), Benin

Margaret thinks that *“it won't do any good”* (2024) to plan for her future, as she doesn't have the time to learn new skills or do an apprenticeship. Margaret is one of many girls in the cohort where we can see a clear trajectory of her time use over the course of her childhood – and the profound impact that this has on the opportunities now available to her as a young adult, and on her aspirations for her

future. Through Rebecca and Margaret's experiences we can again see the complex ways in which **social demands and obligations, such as unpaid care work, coupled with gender norms around girls' time use and agency, dictate the opportunities that are available to girls and thus which aspirations are perceived as attainable.**

From the *Real Choices, Real Lives* cohort girls we are provided with an insight into the support that girls need as they navigate their transition from childhood to adulthood, and from school to employment. Firstly, girls must have the agency to define their own time use and make autonomous decisions about how to best allocate the time they need for activities that will support their future pathways. Secondly, parental support is essential in creating an enabling environment for girls to prioritise their education and skills development. And thirdly, having role models around them who have the same resources and opportunities available to them is important for girls to create a sense of feasibility and achievability, and thus support their aspirations.

6. Conclusion



The experiences shared by the *Real Choices, Real Lives* girls provide us with unique real-world insights into the drivers influencing how adolescent girls are splitting their time as they navigate the transition from childhood to adulthood, and from school to their next steps. The stories and reflections shared by the girls demonstrate that a key driver of girls' time use is gender norms: from a young age girls are exposed to the way that their parents divide care work in the home and begin to imitate their mother's behaviours. As caregivers assign chores to their children along gendered lines, girls become exposed to expectations about the role they 'should' play in the home – and their parents' attitudes are often explicitly communicated to the girls, impressing upon them the virtue of being hardworking in the home, and explaining that they need to 'practice' responsibilities that they will hold as wives and mothers. Over the years, stories from the cohort girls reveal that girls internalise these norms and expectations, and this critically influences their time use as adolescents.

Together with household composition and poverty, gender norms about unpaid care work determine the time girls have available for other activities. Girls' agency is another determining factor in shaping how girls spend their time: from the girls' experiences, we can see that a number demonstrate making agentic decisions about their time use – trading off time spent on certain activities to prioritise others.

The impacts of girls' time use are significant. High levels of unpaid care work can cause girls to miss school, fall behind and perform poorly in classes, and ultimately drop out of school. Among the cohort girls, a number have repeated grades, scaled down to part time education, or left school altogether due to their unpaid care responsibilities. Girls who are mothers have substantially greater unpaid care responsibilities, and because of these duties most of these girls have dropped out of school and feel that they are insurmountable obstacles to their return to education.

On the other hand, girls who have the ability to prioritise their time use in support of their education can be seen to be benefiting from this – a number of girls have now graduated from secondary school, and a few have progressed to university. The stories of these girls highlight the importance of enabling environments – in all of these cases, the girls were supported by the parents to minimise the time spent on unpaid care work in order to dedicate more time to their studies.

The experiences of the girls also highlight the impact of unpaid care work on the time that girls have available to develop vocational skills and plan for their futures; a number of girls shared that they do not have time to undertake income generating work or apprenticeships; other girls feel that their time spent on their pursuits is compromised because they are balancing a number of other responsibilities.

Another critical impact of girls' time use is time poverty, with many girls reporting having little to no time for rest or leisure activities. This affects the girls who have high levels of unpaid care responsibilities – but also the girls who dedicate a significant proportion of their time to their education. Time poverty deprives girls of opportunities to build social networks and participate in community activities and build their leadership capacities; it also leads to girls feeling lonely and isolated. A concerning number of the cohort girls report high levels of stress and fatigue, which has wider impacts on their mental health and wellbeing.

Finally, we can see a relationship between girls' time use and the aspirations that they have for their futures. Evidence from the *Real Choices, Real Lives* cohort demonstrates that girls who can make agentic decisions about their time use in support of achieving their goals tend to have higher ambitions for their futures; key enablers for these aspirations also include the presence of role models in their lives and an enabling and supportive environment provided by their parents and caregivers.

Girls whose time is dominated by unpaid care responsibilities and who have limited autonomy to choose how they spend their time tend to have reduced the scale of their ambitions over the years to align with their perceptions of what is achievable. Girls' aspirations therefore provide us with an insight not only into how they imagine the future and their roles within it, but also into their discernments on what future paths are feasible given their time use, and the opportunities available to them.

This report provides **real-world examples of girls' experiences of their time use, unpaid care work, and the consequences for their lives and opportunities**. It highlights the drivers and influences that motivate how the girls split their time between their various activities and responsibilities, and it demonstrates the impacts (both positive and

negative) that this time use split is having on their education, economic independence, leisure time, health and wellbeing, and aspirations for the future.

The unique contribution that this report offers is in giving voice to the insights and reflections of girls from different contexts around the world.

While time use studies provide valuable quantitative information on the gendered division of unpaid care work, we are seldom given access to the views and experiences of girls in their own words. With this rare access to their voices and everyday realities, we are granted a nuanced picture of girls' time use and the complexities behind how girls' balance responsibilities. *Real Choices, Real Lives* evidence indicates how we can support girls as they transition from childhood to adolescence, and from school to their next steps in further education, paid work, and navigating the future.

7. Recommendations



How do we create a world where gender inequality is properly addressed, and girls can exercise their rights to education and fulfil their potential? The *Real Choices, Real Lives* research demonstrates clearly that tackling girls' time use, and the unfair distribution of unpaid care work, is key. Building on the contributions of feminist economists and activists around the world, the recommendations below have been developed directly from the research findings, including the ideas, opinions and recommendations from the *Real Choices, Real Lives* cohort girls themselves.

The recommendations are also guided by the 4 Rs Framework which emphasises the need to recognise, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work, as well as the need to represent girls and women's voices in policy and decision-making that impacts their lives and their time use.²²³

Recognise girls' unpaid care contributions

The significant amount of unpaid care work performed by girls must be recognised and valued for its critical importance to individuals, families, and society. This recognition must happen at household, community and policy levels.

Recommendations for Governments

- Governments at all levels should take proactive steps to **include measures of unpaid care work in national statistics**, including conducting time use studies with women, men and children to better understand how care work is shared within households and communities.
- Governments must **set specific targets on gender equality and empowerment of girls and women** that uphold their rights to the completion of twelve years of education, vocational training and decent employment.
- Governments should **monitor and evaluate the implementation of gender transformative policies** and wider social protection strategies, such as universal, affordable and accessible childcare services and parental leave policies, to ensure that these are gender-transformative, and evidence-based.
- Governments should **pay care workers a wage that recognises the importance of care**, in order to increase the status and value of care work, both paid and unpaid, in society. Governments must legislate to protect the rights of all carers, ensure they have access to

appropriate training, and are able to benefit from collective bargaining. Governments should also support the transition of care workers from the informal to the formal economy.

Recommendations for INGOs and international agencies

- INGOs should design and implement **gender transformative ECD programming** that emphasises the value of care for society, and the benefits for women, men and children. **These programmes should promote male involvement in both paid and unpaid care work.**
- A key priority of international agencies, such as the United Nations Statistics Division, should be to support countries to strengthen the production, dissemination and use of data and statistics on paid and unpaid care work, care related policies and investments. For example, international agencies should support national governments to develop and implement **gender- and age-sensitive time use studies** to ensure measures of paid and unpaid care are included in national and international statistics.

Recommendations for employers

- Businesses and the private sector have an important role to play in the care economy by providing **decent care jobs**, investing in the professionalisation of the care sector, and implementing care policies that further gender equality in the workplace – such as paid maternity, paternity and shared parental leave.

Recommendations for communities

- Community leaders should create local and contextually specific **social awareness campaigns and discussions** about the value of care work in society, the necessity of gender-equal divisions of labour, and active male involvement in all forms of care work.

Reduce the disproportionate amount of care labour performed by girls and women

Reducing unpaid care work is essential – and can be done through investing in time- and labour-saving services, technology and infrastructure. Reducing time spent on unpaid care leaves more time for education, paid work, leisure, rest and decision-making.

Recommendations for Governments

- Governments at all levels must **invest in improved physical infrastructure**, including piped water, electricity access, sanitation, and safe transport to reduce time spent on caring activities. Governments should also provide cash or in-kind benefits or other demand-side financial support to allow households to purchase **labour-saving devices, infrastructure or services** that would reduce time spent on care in the home – for example, gas stoves or childcare vouchers.
- Governments must invest in **cross-governmental national care systems and instruments** to deliver universal childcare and care for older people and people with disabilities. These care systems should fulfil and protect the universal rights to quality healthcare and social security such as pensions and child benefits. Governments should ensure that these care systems are resilient and prepared to respond to complex and interconnected crises including climate change, conflict and pandemics.
- Governments and industrial/employment ministries should invest in improved **employment and livelihood opportunities in hard-to-reach communities**, so parents do not have to move away from home which results in girls picking up more household tasks.

Recommendations for international agencies

- The UN system has a critical role to play in supporting countries to develop and implement comprehensive care systems – through **mapping care systems and providing technical assistance to governments** as they design and implement policies and programmes to promote decent work in the care sector.

Recommendations for schools and early learning centres

- Early education centres should **align their services with the needs of working parents**, providing full-time hours, and flexibility on days per week.
- Recognising that girls are often time-poor and have little time for leisure, schools should ensure that **time for play and rest are built into curricula**, and expectations about homework and private study are reasonable and in line with the realities of girls' daily lives.

Recommendations for employers

- Businesses must recognise the value of care work and sustain the wellbeing of workers by providing flexible arrangements to ensure that that parents of young children can **manage and prioritise their care responsibilities around their work**.

Redistribute unpaid care work in a fairer and more gender-equal way

There is an urgent need not only to reduce unpaid care work, but to redistribute the responsibility, labour, mental load and cost of this work. This must be shared more equally within families and communities, and with the state and private sector.

Recommendations for Governments

- In partnership with CSOs, the private sector and traditional leaders, governments should challenge harmful norms and **foster social norm change** to better balance the allocation of unpaid responsibilities among girls and women and boys and men. Governments must invest in resources to challenge harmful norms, including through public campaigns and communication strategies that **support men's involvement in care** and encourage existing childcare services to engage with fathers actively and routinely.
- National care systems must include legislation that protects and promotes **paid maternity leave and shared paid parental leave** that includes a period of use-it-or-lose-it paternity leave. Governments should commission studies on parental leave to understand specific barriers to women accessing maternity leave and barriers to men accessing paternity leave and pay: including whether such policies exist, or where social norms act as deterrents, and must act to address these barriers.
- Governments should respect, fulfil and protect girls' and women's right to economic participation by **invest in policies and social protection systems** to create an enabling environment for young women to enter and thrive in the formal labour market.
- Governments and education ministries should invest in **gender transformative education from early learning through to secondary** as a key strategy to address harmful gender norms and stereotypes that perpetuate disproportionate and unjust levels of care work for girls and women.

Recommendations for INGOs and international agencies

- The effective coordination of UN agencies is essential for a coherent and impactful

implementation of a gender-transformative care agenda. Interagency **collaboration, knowledge-sharing and joint programming** offer the potential to align and maximise resources for greater reach and impact and promote the development of common strategies for addressing care inequalities.

- Co-create and co-design **social change communications campaigns and programmes** to promote a shared sense of responsibility for care, particularly in spaces where these ideas around masculinities are formed, such as social media, gaming platforms, schools, and workplaces.
- Design gender and ECD programming that **promote equitable social relations** and engagement of men and boys through combining social protection programmes with messaging about sharing of childcare and domestic chores between girls and women and boys and men.

Recommendations for schools and early learning centres

- Education providers must address barriers to girls' completion of education through inclusion programmes that provide pregnant girls and adolescent mothers with support and flexibility to continue their education. **Financial support, adequate sanitation, and vocational education should also be provided to girls to support them to complete their education.**
- Schools should provide **careers guidance** to all children, showing a wide range of career opportunities that girls and young people have available to them.
- Provide home economics classes which actively include and **engage boys to develop skills including cooking and sewing** to normalise boys and girls equally participating in household work.

Recommendations for employers and workplaces

- Care employers should promote **equal participation of women and men in care jobs** and ensure pathways to women's promotion to senior positions in care occupations.
- Employers and businesses should ensure that paid parental leave is implemented, and they should **champion paternity leave** as being equally important and protected as maternity leave.
- Businesses should **invest in understanding employees' childcare needs** and support the redistribution of care through the provision of benefits and services such as quality and affordable **on-site childcare services** and childcare vouchers.

Recommendations for communities

- Communities should provide support services, learning and guidance for caregivers with aims of **addressing social norms that perpetuate generational gendered divisions of labour** within homes; promoting education for girls and boys; and raising awareness of the importance of rest, leisure and play for wellbeing and early childhood development.
- Community centres should introduce **father-child play groups** aimed at fathers of young children to provide peer support and learning and encourage social change.

Represent girls' voices and experiences in decision-making at all levels

Girls do a significant proportion of unpaid care work, but too often they are shut out of decision-making spaces. Girls must be able to represent their interests and demands in their own voices and participate in decision-making at all levels.

Recommendations for Governments

- Governments at all levels should **consult and include girls and women** in the design of social service and community service policies to ensure that gender considerations are factored in their design, implementation, and monitoring. Girls' and women's voices should be central to assessments of whether transport, infrastructure and care services are compatible with balancing home and work responsibilities.
- Governments must facilitate the **participation of unpaid carers and care workers in decision-making** fora and processes at all levels to ensure that their needs and interests can better inform policymaking.
- Governments should **lower the voting age to 16 years of age** to allow adolescent girls – many of whom are active contributors in their households and societies – to have a say in policies and decisions that affect their lives.

Recommendations for INGOs and international agencies

- INGOs and international bodies like the UN must **centre the voices of adolescent girls** in the design, implementation and evaluation of programming, campaigns and interventions aimed at supporting their late adolescence transitions from school to employment.

Recommendations for schools

- Schools should **consult adolescent girls** on what support they need to manage their education and other competing responsibilities and activities.
- Schools should provide opportunities for girls to **develop their leadership skills** through after school clubs, debating teams, and other activities.

Annexes

Annex 1: Household context of the cohort girls and history of their participation in the study

Starting in 2006 with 135 girls across nine countries, and later increasing to 154, the cohort has reduced to 92 girls in 2024. This is due to migration (18 girls), girls' withdrawal from the study (12 girls), girls' deaths (7 girls), a loss of contact with the girls through changes in contact information, and changes in the geographical scope that Plan International's Country Offices service (10 girls).⁹⁹ In 2024, a further 15 girls were temporarily absent from the study due to timing and availability issues. For this report, we have included only the historical data, stories and experiences of the girls who participated in data collection in 2024.

The below tables provide an overview of the history of all girls' participation in the study, as well as household information for the girls who took part in data collection in 2024. Please see the key for information on girls' yearly participation.

Key:	● Participated	● Temporary Absence	● Migrated
	● Left Study	● Not Part of Study	● Died

⁹⁹ Research activities in Vietnam have taken place in two provinces: Quang Ngai and Thai Nguyen. In 2022, Plan International phased out its presence in the Thai Nguyen province. Without a registered office in the province, it is not possible to gain permission from the local government authorities to conduct research activities; as a result, we were unable to continue to conduct data collection activities with the ten girls from this province.

Name	Girl's Household Context	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Africa																				
Benin																				
Alice	Father (49, pastor and farmer) and mother (48, vendor and farmer). Brothers (25, IT maintenance apprentice and 16, student), sisters (21, apprentice and 11, student), female cousin (16, student) and three girls from the church (22, 17 and 13, students). Alice is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Annabelle	Annabelle is at university in Cotonou, as is her sister (21, student) who she rents a house with near the school. At home, there is her father (49, driver) mother (47, retailer), and two brothers (16 and 11, students).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Barbara	Father (63, farmer) and mother (48, seamstress). Younger brother (11, student). Her eldest brother was recently arrested. Barbara is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Catherine	Father (51, painter) and mother (41, homemaker). Two younger brothers (15 and 12, students). Catherine is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Elaine	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Eleanor	Mother (57, farmer and vendor). Lives with nephew (10, student) and two nieces (8 and 6, students); the children of her older half- brother who makes cobblestones in Porto Novo. Another older brother runs a shop. Eleanor couldn't keep up with school and dropped out 3 years ago. She is a seamstress apprentice.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Elizabeth	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ianna	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Isabelle	Lives only with aunt (41, retailer), her three male cousins have recently left (14, 15 and 19, students) for study and training. Isabelle's father was released from prison but involved in a fatal road accident. Her uncle was also involved in a separate serious road accident but is recovering. Her two older brothers moved out of the house, one attend university in Cotonou and the other works in a syrup manufacturing company. Isabelle is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Jacqueline	Mother (31, retailer). Lives with brothers (8 and 6) and sisters (13 and 11) who are all in school. Her father (41, driver) has left the home looking for work. Jacqueline is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Layla	Layla lives away from home, with a lady who she works for doing housework and selling chillies and onions at the market. Father (49, bicycle repairer and farmer) and mother (34, retailer). Sister (20, retailer) and her son (3), as well as Layla's brothers (11, 9 and 7, students). Layla is no longer at school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Lillian	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Margaret	Paternal aunt (43, farmer and vendor) and female cousin (20, seamstress apprentice). Her aunt is one of two wives in the household. Margaret dropped out of school, and she is selling at the market and would like to do a dressmaking apprenticeship.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Omalara	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Thea	Mother (46, vendor). Brother (27, fabric maker) and his wife (22, vendor) and his newborn daughter. Thea has a female cousin in the home (10, student). Her two brothers (21, student and 24, agricultural technician) have left the home. Thea is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Name	Girl's Household Context	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Africa																				
Togo																				
Adjoa	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Aisosa	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ala-Woni	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Anti	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Anti-Yara	Anti-Yara lives with her father (53, farmer), mother (50, homemaker and wholesale vendor) sister (12, student) and male cousin (20, student). Her brother (21, student) lives away from the home to study and sister (25) has left the home for marriage. Anti-Yara attends secondary school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Aria	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ayomide	Ayomide lives with her baby (14months), grandfather (81, farmer), grandmother (64, homemaker), maternal aunt (38, retailer), male cousin (12, student) female cousin (11, student) and half-brother (9, student). Ayomide left school when she became pregnant.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Azia	Azia lives in a polygamous household with her father (84, farmer), mother (58, retailer), father's other wives (72, collects sand to sell, and 69, retailer), four adult brothers (27, 25, 23 and 13) and female cousin. The household receive remittances from Azia's older siblings. Azia is still at school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Djoumai	Father (71, farmer) and mother (66, charcoal seller). Her four adult brothers (51, 41, 36, and 25) two sisters-in-law (30 and 23), sister (16), three male cousins (13, 12, 18 months) and seven female cousins (16, 15, 10, 7, 6, 3, and 18 months). Djoumai is learning sewing as a trade and is no longer at school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Dofi	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Esi	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Essohana	Mother (53, homemaker) and little sister (12, student). Her older brothers (34 and 31) live nearby. She is no longer at school because they cannot afford it (as it included boarding) but she hopes to learn a trade. She has had two nephews and a niece born in the last year and her uncle has recently passed.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Fezire	Father (44, clerk/deputy imam of the mosque) and mother (34, retailer). Her two brothers (18 (her twin) and 16, students) and her three sisters (10 and 6, students; 18 months). Fezire has left school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Folami	Mother (40, seamstress) and Folami's son (3 years old). A brother (15) and a sister (10) are both in school. Her uncle and his wife live in the home too. Her father lives and works in Nigeria and occasionally visits. Folami is not at school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Iara	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Isoka	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Izegbe	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ladi	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Larba	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Lelem	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mangazia	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Melyah	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nana-Adja	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nini-Rike	Nini-Rike lives in a polygamous household with her father (50, farmer), mother (45, manager) and her father's two co-wives (40 and 34). She has thirteen brothers aged 4 to 33 years, six sisters aged 3 to 13 years, and a sister-in-law (26) in the home. Nini-Rike left school to learn to sew.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Reine	Grandfather (71, farmer) and grandmother (61, retailer). Uncle (32, mason), Aunt (26), four male cousins (22, 11, 12, and 7, students) and female cousin (15, student). Reine is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tene	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Name	Girl's Household Context	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Africa																				
Uganda																				
Achen	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Amelia	Father (shopkeeper), mother (shopkeeper), three brothers, two sisters, and a toddler niece. Amelia is enrolled in school and worried about her exams.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Beti	Father (teacher, 52), mother (farmer, 47), brother (11), sisters (students, 14, 10, 8, and 9). Outside the home, Beti has three brothers in the army and another brother in mechanics. Beti is enrolled in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Dembe	Dembe has left her grandmother's house, now she is pursuing a course in hairdressing. She is now staying with her father (42, farmer) and mother (30, farmer). She lives with four brothers (11, 10, 8, 6, students), and two sisters (15 and 4). Dembe and Jane are twins.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Jane	Jane normally lives with her father (farmer, 53), mother (farmer, 50), brothers (farmers aged 32 and 20 and students aged 14 and 10) and sisters (farmers aged 30 and 22 and students aged 12, 7, 5, 3). One of her brothers now has a baby. She has a 24-year-old brother who has recently left for work. Jane left school because of school fees. Jane and Dembe are twins.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Joy	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Justine	Father (vet, 56), mother (farmer, 53), brother (20, student), sisters (22, student and 27, homemaker), male cousins (18 and 9, students, and 3), a female cousin (10, student) and two nieces (8 and 5). Justine's eldest sister and her children came to live in the family home. Her oldest brother has a child but does not live with them. Justine lives at home but is in boarding school so only is in the home on the holidays.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Miremba	Father (farmer, 53), mother (farmer, 48), brother (farmer, 19) and sisters (20; homemaker, and 17, student) and female cousin (2). Her oldest sister has just moved in with her daughter. Miremba is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Namazzi	Mother (farmer, 48), and female cousin (12, student), and niece (4, student). Her elder siblings have left the house, and her father left the family a few years ago. Namazzi is enrolled in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nasiche	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nimisha	Father (farmer, 51), mother (farmer, 48), brothers (students, 18 and 10), and sisters (16, 7, and 6). Her brother (22) and sister (24) have left the home for work, where they both contribute to the household income. Some animals on their farm were stolen. Nimisha is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rebecca	Father (farmer, 42), mother (farmer, 30), brothers (12, 11, 10, 8, 6, students) and sisters (15 and 4, students). Her oldest sister left the house as she is married. Rebecca is no longer in school and is learning hairdressing.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sheila	Mother is divorced (33). Sheila's father passed away in 2005 and she remarried but he has since left her and his children. Her sister (4) lives at home but other sisters (13, 12, 11, and 6) do not live at her home. Sheila's mother is struggling with affording to live, including paying for medical bills, so Sheila had to leave school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Shifa	Shifa is living away from home at her aunt's house because it is nearer to her school. But in her household there is her mother (44, farmer) and two brothers (12 and 10) and two sisters (7 and 3), as well as siblings (23 and 21 as housekeepers in Saudi Arabia; and 20 in metal works) who have also left the home - these siblings contribute to the household income.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sylvia	Father (farmer, 58), mother (farmer, 48), sisters (15, 9, 6, and 4). Sylvia's brother has left for work. Sylvia is still in school, but lives with her aunt during school time due to her home being closer to the school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Name	Girl's Household Context	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Asia																				
Cambodia																				
Bopha	Father (42, farmer) and mother (37, farmer). Sister (14) and brother (11) both students. Bopha is still in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Davy	Father (56, farmer) and (44, farmer). Brother (21, construction worker) and his wife (22, collects and sells cashew nuts) and his son (2). Younger brothers (16 and 14, students). Her older sister (25) has left the home after getting married. Davy is in her final year of secondary school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kannitha	Mother (57, cleaner). Sisters (26, farmer and 22, hairdresser) and brothers-in law (29 and 28). Her father passed away, aged 56. Her sister, the farmer, is pregnant. Kannitha is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kanya	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Leakhena	Father (53, police) and mother (44, farmer). Her elder brother (29) and sisters (22 and 27) have moved out. Leakhena is in the final year of school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Lina	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mealea	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mony	Mony is living away from home with her uncle while at university. At home is her father (38, farmer) and mother (35) and brother (9, student). She visits home twice a month.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nakry	Mother (47, homemaker). Sisters (16 and 12, students) and brothers (13 and 8, students). Her father passed away aged 52. She has a sibling at university. Nakry is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Puthea	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Reaksmey	Father (63, farmer) and mother (63, farmer). Brother (14, student). Reaksmey is now pregnant, and her partner has moved into the home. They hope to have a marriage ceremony when they have the money for it. She left school last year after an extended period of absence meant she was a grade behind, and now she picks and sells cashews.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Roumany	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sokanha	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sothany	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Thearika	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Name	Girl's Household Context	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Asia																				
Philippines																				
Angela	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Chesa	Father (48, farmer) and mother (43, homemaker). Two brothers (16, student, and 5 months, newborn) and a sister (8, student) live at home. Her sister (21, cashier and student) and brother (19, security guard) have left the home to work and study in Manila and to also contribute to the household income. Chesa attends school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Christine	Father (51, Farmer and sometimes fisher) and mother (44, homemaker). Two brothers (22, graduate and 8, student) and grandmother (84). Christine is in school and has a boyfriend living in Manila.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Darna	Lives with her brother (21, student) in a boarding house. Her father (46, farmer/welder) lives at the family home in a remote, rural area and contribute to Darna's household income. Her mother (48, housekeeper) lives and works abroad with her own family and does not contact the family anymore.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Dolores	Father (41, farmer) and mother (35, homemaker). Lives with two sisters (15 and 12, students). Her grandfather passed away in recent months. Dolores is in school and studying to graduate.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Jasmine	Living with her grandmother, father (48, farmer), mother (47, farmer), sister (19, homemaker) and 3-month-old nephew. Jasmine is very close to her niece (8) - who has recently left the home to stay with Jasmine's aunt, which Jasmine is upset about. Jasmine is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Jocelyn	Father (51, farmer/driver) and mother (49, homemaker). Three brothers (19, 15, 11, students) live at home, while her older sister (24) has left the home to be married. Jocelyn is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kyla	Father (55, pastor) and mother (60, paster). Two sisters (26, student and 24, teacher) and niece (4). Her oldest sister (29) and brother (30, bank employee) work live away from home with their own respective families. Kyla is in school and has a boyfriend.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mahalia	Father (59, farmer) and mother (58, homemaker). Two brothers (26, security guard and 22, student) and two sisters (30, homemaker and 19, unemployed). Three nephews (11, 9, 4) live with Mahalia too. Three sisters (37, 33, and 25) and three brothers (34, 29, and 23) live away from the home to work. Mahalia is in school and has a girlfriend.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Maricel	Mother (50, resort caretaker), brother (27, seasonal fisher and mostly unemployed), sisters (24, unemployed, and 15, student) and her elder sister's partner (22, unemployed). She has two nieces (1 year old and newborn). Her father (62) is a farm caretaker living in Manila and contributing to the household. Maricel has recently returned to school after being often absent with chronic leg pain.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Melanie	Melanie lives with her son (18 months) and husband. Melanie is no longer in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Michelle	Father (50, farmer) and mother (49, utility worker) and three sisters (21, 15, and 12, students). The family receive remittances from her sister (27, cashier) and brother (24, worker) who live in the city. She is in school and due to graduate soon.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nicole	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Reyna	Moved to her sister's barangay for school. Father (60, farmer) and mother (50, homemaker) live with her 5 nephews (10, 9, 8, 3, 2). Her brother (23) and sisters (32 and 27, both security guards) all work in cities, sending remittances.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rosamie	Father (55, farmer) and mother (50, farmer/homemaker). Lives with sister (14), sister-in-law (30, office worker), and nephew (4). Outside the home, there are three sisters/in-laws (23, student; 30, worker; and 31, retailer) and two brothers (27, worker; 29 construction worker). Rosamie is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rubylyn	Father (50, driver) and mother (41, homemaker). Grandfather, Sister (13) and Brother (9) live at home. Her boyfriend (28) lives with the family too.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Name	Girl's Household Context	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Asia																				
Vietnam																				
Chau	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Hang	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Hoa	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Huong	Father (54, village head) and mother (46, farmer) and grandfather (81, retired). Her brother (21) has finished university. Her grandmother (88) had a stroke and has moved to Huong's aunt's house to be cared for. Huong is in school and due to take university entrance exams.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kieu	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Kim	Father (51, commune official) and mother (tailor). Her older brother is living away from home at university. Kim is still in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ly	Ly lives only with her mother (56, informal labourer including as a cook and sawmill worker). Ly is still in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mai	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nguyet	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nhi	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Oanh	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Quynh	Father (54, farmer), mother (43, kindergarten staff) is working away from home, and grandfather (89, farmer). Her older brother is at university. Quynh is in her last year of high school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sen	Father (48, driver and farmer) and mother (45, farmer). Older brother (25, worker previously in the army) and younger brother (14, student) and younger sister (13, student). Sen is still in school and is taking extra classes.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tan	Father (46, labourer) and mother (42, worker) with a younger brother and sister. Tan is in school and cares for her siblings while her parents work.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Thi	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Thom	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tien	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Trinh	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Uyen	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Yen	Father (48, farmer) and mother (43, farmer) and brother (16, pupil). Yen is in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Name	Girl's Household Context	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Latin America & the Caribbean																				
Brazil																				
Bianca	Father (59, paediatrician's assistant) and mother (39, laundry attendant). Brothers (20 and 15, students) and sister (11, student). Bianca has recently finished school and is hoping to take an exam to enter university.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Beatriz	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Camila	Mother (38, homemaker and hairdresser). Lives with two brothers (18, delivery person and 14, student). Camila is in the ninth grade.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Catarina	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Elena	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Gabriela (formerly Amanda) ¹	Mother (41, homemaker) and stepfather (33, salesperson). Sisters (19 and 8, students). Her two-year-old niece comes to stay often, as her parents are working. Gabriela is in her final year of secondary school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Feliciano	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Fernanda	Fernanda is living with her maternal grandmother as she is having difficulty sleeping in the home where she lived with her father until his death, but she visits the family home often. Fernanda finished secondary school last year and is working as a shop assistant now.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Florencia	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Juliana	Grandfather (53, government worker) and grandmother (52, catering). Uncle (28, driver), aunt (22, perfume seller), sister (16, student) and male cousin (7, student).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Larissa	Mother (35, kitchen assistant), grandfather (69, retired) and grandmother (61, retired). Uncle (38, driver), aunt (25, supermarket admin), and brother (9, student). Larissa is studying at secondary school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Luiza	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Margarida	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Natália	Father (56, self-employed) and mother (54, farmer). Sisters (22, student and 20, unemployed) and nephew (11, student). Her eldest sister (27) has left the home recently. Natalia is in secondary school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Patrícia	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Pietra	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sancia	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sofia	Father (painter) and mother (38, homemaker). Brothers (16 and 11, students). Sofia is in secondary school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Tatiana	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Valentina	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

¹ This girl was previously had the pseudonym 'Amanda'. In 2023 her pseudonym was changed to 'Gabriela'.

Name	Girl's Household Context	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Latin America & the Caribbean																				
Dominican Republic																				
Chantal	Mother (34, homemaker) and maternal grandmother (55, seller). Aunt (17), sister (13), and brother (3 and 4) are all students. Her father migrated to Puerto Rico two years ago and her maternal uncle migrated to the United States two months ago. Chantal is in secondary school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Dariana	Dariana has left home to live with her aunt (psychologist) and female cousin (11, student) across the country. Mother (38, homemaker) has just migrated to Puerto Rico to work in a restaurant. Dariana plans to study Chemical Engineering at university.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Griselda	Griselda lives with her partner and her son. Griselda visits her father daily, as do her sister who have also moved out of the family home. Griselda works in a bank and studies on a course on Sundays, 'Prepara'.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Katerin	Katerin lives with her husband and two children, in a home above her husband's family. She visits her family home, where her father (37, informal worker in construction), mother (37, domestic worker), and sister (11, student) live. Katerin is not in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Leyla	Mother (41, domestic worker) and three brothers (24, driver and 7 and 5, students). Her mother works in the capital come visits on the weekends, and Leyla's stepfather visits daily to see the children. She is doing her baccalaureate.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Madelin	Madelin is studying medicine at university and living away from home. Mother (39, domestic worker) and stepfather (54, carpenter). Brother (11, student).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Nicol	Father (46, bus driver) and mother (nursing graduate, working as a police officer). Brother (23, bus driver) and sister (12, student). Nicol is at school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Raisa	Riase lives away from her family home with her mother's cousin, having moved out recently for university, but visits every two weeks. Father (39, surveyor) and mother (40, bioanalyst). Brother (5) and two sisters (8 and 5) are all in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rebeca	Father (54, farmer) and mother (44, negotiator). Two older sisters (23, teacher, and 20, student). Rebeca is at university now, and lives at home.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Saidy	Lives with maternal grandmother (68, farmer and homemaker) and is at university.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Sharina	Sharina lives away from home while at university but visits once or twice a month. At home is her father (39, farmer) and mother (33, homemaker). Also, two sisters (16 and 9, students) and two brothers (13, student and 18 months).	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Valerie	Valerie is married and lives with her husband (26, construction worker) and young son. She is not working and takes a course on Saturdays. At home is her father (76, farmer) and mother (40 homemaker). Three older brothers are farmers (29, 23, 21), two brothers are students (17 and 16) as is a younger sister (12). Her sister-in-law (18) lives in the home also with a niece aged 1 year, 8 months.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Name	Girl's Household Context	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Latin America & the Caribbean																				
El Salvador																				
Andrea	Data not held for 2024	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Bessy	Maternal grandfather (54, farmer/construction worker) and maternal grandmother (62, homemaker). Also lives with sister (21) who does domestic work. She visits her mother twice a week, and she has not been in school for a year, as the schools were too far away.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Doris	Mother (34, gardener), grandmother (67, homemaker and baker). Also lives with Aunt (38, homemaker), uncle (Uber driver), brother (12, student), and male cousins (aged 1 and 2). Her aunt (35, domestic worker) lives in the USA and sends remittances. Her uncle's wife recently left the home and took her children with her. Doris no longer goes to school and has a baby; she does not have a relationship with the child's father.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Gabriela	Father (40, motorcyclist) and mother (33, homemaker). Lives with sister (16, student). Gabriela goes to school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Gladys	Mother (33, homemaker and shopkeeper), brother (14, student) and sister (10, student). Her stepfather has recently left the home for the USA. Gladys is still in school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Hillary	Lives with her husband (28, administrator), father-in-law (52, carpenter) and mother-in-law (52, homemaker). Hillary's son (2), and brother-in-law (11, student) live in the home too. Hillary is out of school due to having her child, but she wishes to return when she finishes breastfeeding.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Karen	Father (38, taxi driver), mother (35, homemaker) and sister (8, student). Karen's grandparents also live in the house. She goes to school and on weekends Karen will cook for pay.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mariel	Grandfather (72), grandmother (66, homemaker), and male cousin (20, student). Mariel has finished school and is not in any further education but is thinking about it.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Raquel	Grandmother (79, homemaker) and father (54, police officer). She lives with her sister (13, student), two aunts (51, nanny; 59, nursing home carer), and two male cousins (both 14, students). Raquel is at school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Rebecca	Aunt (28, homemaker) and uncle (28, waiter). Lives with female (10) and male (5) cousin. Rebecca is not at school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Stephany	Father (37, labourer) and mother (33, homemaker). Lives with brother and sister (both 12 and students). Stephany has graduated and just started working.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Susana	Susana has moved to live with her father (38, ranch caretaker) and grandmother (63, trader). Lives with uncle (42, motorcyclist), female cousin (22, domestic worker), sister (19, student), and aunt (18, domestic worker). Susana will be completing her studies soon.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Valeria	Lives with maternal side of the family, including grandmother (63, homemaker), two maternal aunts (34 and 22, workers), her aunt's husband (26, worker), three cousins (aged 16, 11, and 5 all in school), and her sister (15, student) and brother (8, student). Valeria's mother is in detention awaiting sentencing. Valeria is no longer at school.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Annex 2: Girl Time Use Tool 2024

The following tool was used as part of data collection with the cohort girls in 2024. Text in italics signifies instructions for the interviewers, which were not read aloud to the participants.

Instructions for Interviewer: *Below is a retrospective diary to present to the girl. Please give her a copy and a pen/pencil – the girl can either complete the table herself, or you can write the answers in for her if she prefers or does not feel comfortable writing.*

Part 1:

Instructions for Interviewer: *Ask the girl how she spends a typical day in her week.*

- ***If yesterday was a typical day***, ask her to describe what she did yesterday
- ***If yesterday was not a typical day*** for the girl (for example, a special occasion like a wedding or family celebration, or she was unwell, attended a funeral, etc.) then ask the girl to think about a typical day instead – suggest perhaps the day before yesterday.

Ask the girl to use the retrospective diary to think through what she was doing at each time during the day. This does not need to be exact – if the girl did multiple tasks or activities during one period of the day, these can all be listed and the girl does not need to specify exactly how long was spent on each task/activity (for example, if she spent 30 minutes doing homework, 10 minutes doing washing, and 20 minutes sweeping the house, she can just write 'homework, washing, sweeping' for that hour). If she spent multiple hours doing one activity (for example, sleeping), then this can be indicated for multiple hours.

The diary is broken up into 'main activity' and 'simultaneous/secondary activity' columns. Please explain to the girl that the simultaneous/secondary activity are the tasks or activities that she might be doing at the same time as something else. For example, while she is doing her homework (main activity) she might also be babysitting her younger siblings and soaking beans for dinner (simultaneous activities). Not every main activity will have simultaneous activities – for example, while she is at school, the girl might not be doing anything other than her school lessons.

The girl should not complete the 'Code' columns – this is to be completed as part of 'Part 2' of this activity.

Please stay with the girl while she completes the exercise sheet in case she has questions, or so that you can prompt her if she does not remember what she does (for instance, if she says that she doesn't know what she did yesterday afternoon, you could ask: "Do you usually spend the afternoon at home, or go out?")

An example timetable is below – please show the example to the girl to help demonstrate what the activity is asking for, but please make sure that she does not copy the example or think that hers should match.

Once the girl has completed the diary, probe if there are any categories missing in the girl's day – she may do certain activities on certain days, meaning 'yesterday' didn't capture all of her usual activities. For example, if she hasn't listed any paid work in her day, ask her if she does paid work on other days during the week – and if so, how many hours would she normally do that for? If she hasn't listed any chores or care responsibilities, probe whether she does any of these tasks at the same time as doing other activities – for example, watching children while doing her homework.

Diary Activity^{rr}

How do you spend a typical day? If yesterday was a typical day, please think about what you did yesterday.

Time	Main activity	Code	Simultaneous/ secondary activity	Code
00:00 – 01:00				
01:00 – 02:00				
02:00 – 03:00				
03:00 – 04:00				
04:00 – 05:00				
05:00 – 06:00				
06:00 – 07:00				
07:00 – 08:00				
08:00 – 09:00				
09:00 – 10:00				
10:00 – 11:00				
11:00 – 12:00				
12:00 – 13:00				
13:00 – 14:00				
14:00 – 15:00				
15:00 – 16:00				
16:00 – 17:00				
17:00 – 18:00				
18:00 – 19:00				
19:00 – 20:00				
20:00 – 21:00				
21:00 – 22:00				
22:00 – 23:00				
23:00 – 00:00				

Part 2:

Instructions for Interviewer: When the girl has completed the diary (or you have completed it with her), please go through the diary with her to categorise (or 'code') what type of activity each entry represents: school, homework/studying, paid work, chores and household tasks, caring for someone else, rest/leisure. Please complete this part of the diary for the girl, using the following code:

ST	School or Training
HW	Homework/studying
PW	Paid work
UW	Unpaid work
CH	Chores and household tasks
CW	Care work
RL	Rest and leisure
O	Other

^{rr} N.B. The table has been reduced in size for the purpose of including as an Annex; it was presented to the girls as a full-page table.

Examples of how activities might be categorised are:

ST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending school • Attending training course
HW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing homework • Studying for exams • Doing school assignments
PW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing wage or salary work • Working in family business for a wage • Making and selling products at a market • Agricultural work for a wage
UW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planting, harvesting, tending livestock or other work on the family farm for no income • Working in family shop for no income • Helping family member/neighbour in their business for no income
CH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting firewood, collecting water • Preparing food/cooking for the family • Cleaning the home • Washing clothes and ironing • Shopping for food and household products
CW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Babysitting siblings, supervising siblings or other children, helping a sibling with homework • Taking care of a baby (including their own) including breastfeeding, feeding, bathing, playing • Looking after ill or elderly relative, accompanying a child or relative to school or health clinic • Helping organise activity at church, community work
RL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialising with family/friends • Praying • Sleeping • Social media, watching television, listening to the radio, using the internet • Playing sport, attending a sports event • Reading, attending a cultural event, hobbies
O	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activism in community as part of a youth group • Personal hygiene, receiving health care • Environmental preservation – recycling, reforestation etc.

It is important to check with the girl how she categorises each activity – as some tasks can be done for different reasons. For example, spending time reading might be for schoolwork (HW), for leisure/personal enjoyment (RL), or to be able to help provide information to a family member (CW).

Annex 3: Economic Empowerment Vignette

The following vignette was shared with the cohort girls during their interviews this year. Text in italics signifies instructions for the interviewers, which were not read aloud to the participants.

Read out Story 1 below and follow-up with prompts and questions to understand the girl's reaction to the story and her opinions about it. Adapt the story by changing the details to be relevant locally (e.g. name, country, location, type of higher education facility etc).

[INSERT IMAGINARY GIRL'S NAME] is 17 years old and lives in a [INSERT RURAL/URBAN] community in [COUNTRY]. She is in her last year of high school. In her spare time, she helps her father with his farming responsibilities. After she completes school, she is thinking about studying farming techniques at [INSERT RELEVANT HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL], so that she can manage the family's agricultural land in the future.

In her community, it is mostly men that lead on farming responsibilities, while women pick up these activities after they have completed their household responsibilities. Some of [IMAGINARY GIRL'S NAME] classmates, both boys and girls, have heard about her interest doing agricultural work full-time and make comments to discourage her future plans. Some boys say she wouldn't make as much profit as a male, as she cannot physically harvest as much produce. [NAME OF IMAGINARY GIRL] thinks they underestimate how much she enjoys farming and how good she is at it.

[IMAGINARY GIRL'S NAME] has some female friends who also pick up harvesting work, either by also supporting their parents' harvesting activities, or in paid seasonal work. She thinks that, together, they prove girls can be valued farmers in their community. Through word of mouth, they want to change the way the children at school see girls doing agricultural work, including supporting younger girls who are interested in school-gardening projects.

- What do you think about this story/how does it make you feel? Why?
- What do you think about the girl in this story?
- Did the girl's attitude to this challenge surprise you? Why/why not?
- Do you know any girls who have done something similar to this in your community?

If the girl answers 'yes':

- What did they do? How did people in your community react?
- What do you think about this?

Probe: is it something positive or negative?

- What are the biggest challenges facing girls in your community? Why?
- What do you think girls could do to address these challenges? Why?
- Who would you speak to about the challenges facing girls in your community? Why?
- What could adults do to help girls in your community address these challenges?
- What could boys do to help girls in your community address these challenges?
- If girls in this community could tell adults one important thing about their lives, what would it be?

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