



# « I walk with the boys »

## **Trajectories of young people towards violence: mirror of the gender dynamics of their society?**

A local analysis of gender roles and social pressures in Cote d'Ivoire and Mali.

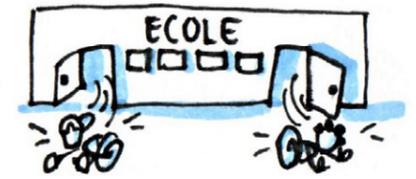
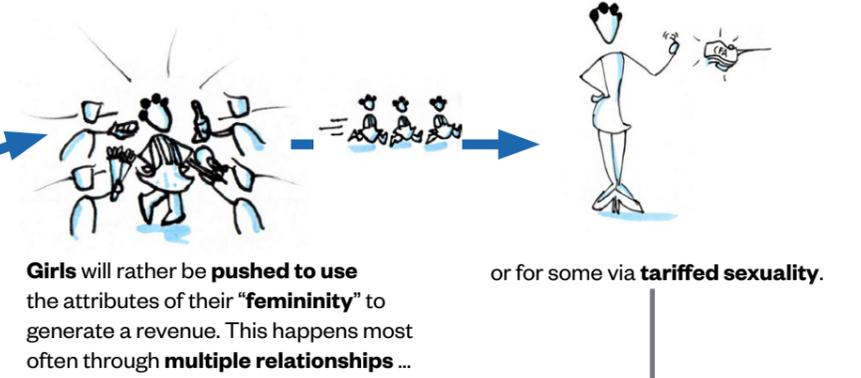
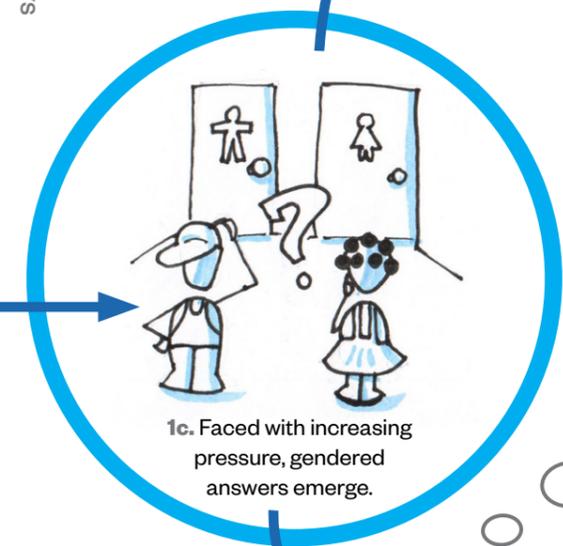
A complementary study to the report *“Beyond ideology and greed”*



# ILLUSTRATED SYNTHESIS



SOCIAL PRESSURE ON YOUNG GIRLS AND BOYS



4. Significant risks regarding the dropout rates of school are directly the result of social expectations and social pressure, which are partially motivated by the shortcoming of socioeconomic safety.



6b. The collapse of the dominant success model can push these women, due to the lack of alternatives, to look for a new meaning to their lives through the membership in alternative groups.



VIOLENCE AS AN ALTERNATIVE PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

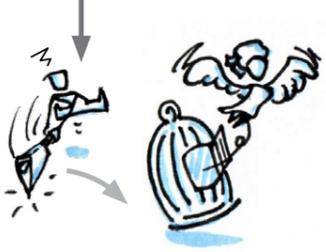
1b. Precariousness is not the same as poverty or lack of employment, but means instability or the lack of socioeconomic safety.



2. The pressure on young girls to earn quick money comes also from their peers.



3c. The reconfiguration of responsibilities causes a crisis for masculinity.



3b. The economic ascent does not lead to emancipation.



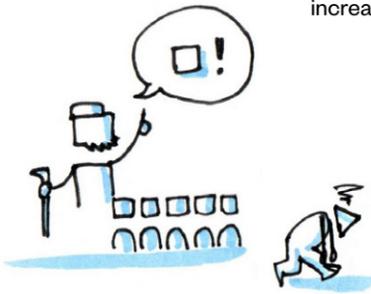
1a. Social expectations towards young people, regardless of gender, are getting transformed nowadays by focusing increasingly on their economic contributions.



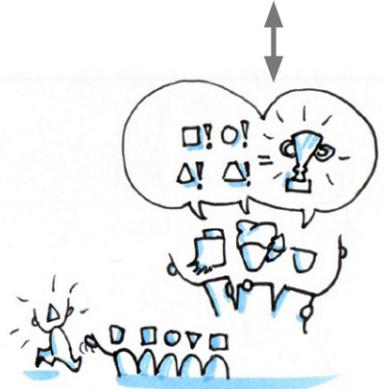
3a. Transformation of the woman's economic role due to the man's inability to ensure the monopoly of his role as a provider.



5a. Overly strict authority and discipline can also encourage youth, girls and boys equally, to follow trajectories towards marginality and, possibly, violence.



5b. The multiplication of possible imaginaries of success reduces the risks of marginalization - especially among young girls



WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ASCENT AND ITS SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A CHANGING SOCIAL MODEL: BETWEEN SOCIAL CONTROL AND INCREASED VULNERABILITY

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*Given the time constraints on this process, the analysis did not allow for concrete operational recommendations to be formulated with the level of insights and legitimacy that Interpeace and its partner organizations set as their standards. Key questions emerged nonetheless. These should trigger deeper reflection – especially in the case of actors involved in or designing action aimed at women empowerment, economic development, education and fight against dropout, or, more broadly, any action involving youth.*

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## CHECK-LIST

### **Do youth-related interventions contain opportunities to promote youth contact with models of success and gender roles with which they can identify?**

This study confirms what the preceding study had already demonstrated: for many young people today, the ideas of success promoted by traditional society, by their parents and/or school, do not respond to their expectations and aspirations. Many trajectories towards violence are explained initially as a quest for answers to their questions and for models of success.

The multiplication and diversification of models and pathways towards socially-promoted success reduce the problems of integration, risks of marginalization and ultimately the risks that these young people will adopt paths that put them in vulnerable situations. It is particularly the case among young girls who, between traditional, highly constraining models and the excessive valuation of physical appearance, have few models in which to recognize and project themselves. New, gender-specific models must therefore be promoted, emphasizing the construction of positive identities and skills for both femininity and masculinity. For young girls, this means a diversification of pathways towards possible success; and among young men, models that promote non-violent masculinity, free from the pressure to dominate.

Many actions, whether aimed specifically at young people or not, can be opportunities to promote alternative models or conceptions of success in which young people can project themselves: involving young people by creating a link with the community, putting forward inspiring local actors (at certain stages of an intervention or in the media), promoting initiatives and/or success of young people in a related field, creating opportunities for mentorship, etc. Do the developed actions open and maximize these opportunities to create/enhance new, inspiring models of success for youth?

**Beyond economic indicators of income generation or job creation, do economic interventions contribute to a better social safety net?**

Precariousness, understood as instability, uncertainty or the absence of an immediate or future social safety net, is an important accelerator of the pressure transmitted from parents to their children to contribute economically. Do economic development interventions aim beyond quantitative indicators, towards strengthening social bonds and the economic security/stability of families?

**Do interventions designed to combat and/or prevent school drop-out integrate socio-economic and gender-sensitive measures – especially in the most economically vulnerable areas?**

A significant part of the pressure for young boys and girls to leave school, or which prevents them from joining in the first place, comes from social pressure – though our previous report also found that schools themselves suffer from a significant crisis of legitimacy. Are educational interventions in vulnerable economic zones accompanied – beyond school – by socio-economic measures of support, particularly in relation to the constitution/reinforcement of the social safety net mentioned above? The education system needs to reinvent its vision, beyond education for all, to find ways to ensure the success of girls and boys. How can the factors of school drop-out specific to girls and boys, emanating from socially-constructed gender roles, be accounted for? What ‘second chance’ opportunities does the system offer for adolescents who have dropped out of school early and would like to resume relevant learning?

**Are interventions designed to transform (promote, emancipate) the social role of women and girls accompanied by actions designed to redefine masculinity?**

Gender identities are interrelated and interdependent. Any intervention to promote women and girls must be accompanied by actions to redefine masculinity, otherwise the risks of negative counter-reactions are considerable. Many actors are now aware of these risks, and many interventions (though by no means all) are, for example, accompanied by awareness-raising among men. This is an important first step. However, while some argue that awareness-raising can help appease some men and help them to better understand, negative pressure on them usually comes from the wider environment (family, community, society). Simple awareness-raising is therefore not enough: the transformation must extend to the whole community.

Since gender is relational, transforming the constraints and roles of a specific gender (e.g. the role of women) requires parallel actions to transform the other (in this case, addressing masculinity). Interventions for the social and economic promotion of women and girls should therefore consider i) whether they incorporate a precise understanding and transformation of conceptions of femininity and masculinity – accounting for the conflicts that might emerge, and ii) if so, whether actions could be included and/or developed in parallel, specifically designed to engage and work with men and boys of all ages on a redefinition or transformation of masculinity not based on authority or domination.