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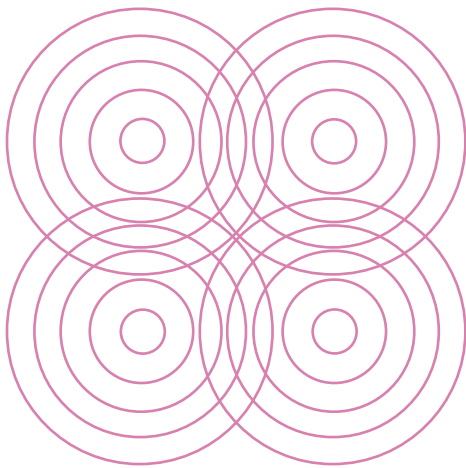
# MEASURING GENDER-RELATED SOCIAL NORMS

## LEARNING REPORT 01

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
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# INTRODUCTION

## THE LEARNING GROUP ON SOCIAL NORMS AND GENDER-RELATED HARMFUL PRACTICES

The Gender, Violence, and Health Centre (GVHC) at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) has launched a learning and reflection group on social norms and gender-related harmful practices, including gender-based violence (GBV). There is increasing interest among donors and practitioners to harness insights from social norms theory to catalyse change around gender inequity and harmful gender-related practices. Little guidance is available, however, to help practitioners integrate simple norms measures and change strategies within field-based programming. As theory-based insights open promising avenues for achieving change, a gap emerged between theory and its application within development practice.

**The mission of this group is thus:**

To translate and adapt insights and methods from social norm theory and research into practical guidance for development practitioners seeking to transform harmful gender-related practices in low and middle-income countries.

Participants share and discuss individual solutions to common dilemmas around measurement and practice. Together, we are working on a programme of research and practice to test strategies that can help people negotiate new positive norms, and/or dismantle norms that keep harmful practices in place. Our collective experience will inform the next wave of intervention evaluation and norms measurement.

## THE BALTIMORE MEETING ON GBV AND SOCIAL NORMS MEASUREMENT

As part of the learning initiative, LSHTM convened an expert group meeting in July 2016 on the measurement of social norms sustaining GBV. The meeting focused on identifying best-practice strategies to diagnose and measure social norms. Participants were drawn from groups that already had data and research experience attempting to capture gender-related norms and practices in the field. The meeting was kept relatively small to ensure productive exchange among the few teams that have experimented with different strategies for collecting quantitative data on norms and gender-based violence.

# SUMMARY OF KEY LEARNINGS

- Using social norm theory to change discriminatory gender practices can only be successful if practitioners **take into account factors other than norms** that work to sustain a given behaviour. The LSHTM team suggested a practical framework that practitioners can use to identify the factors (in addition to norms) that must be part of a comprehensive strategy to transform harmful behaviours.

- Qualitative **diagnosis of norms is crucial for designing successful interventions**. Standard vignette methods have proven extremely useful for quickly identifying the norms, attitudes and beliefs that help sustain a practice in a particular setting. Participants shared tools that can help design effective vignettes for collecting social norms data.

- Field experience demonstrates that **existing strategies for measuring social norms are unnecessarily complex**; quick and simple ways to measure norms do exist. One, for instance, focuses on measuring perceptions of anticipated sanctions for non-compliers. (More examples appear in the report.)

- Analysing **social norms data requires disaggregation** at the level of the reference group. We found evidence that inappropriate aggregation of data can result in meaningless findings. Practitioners do not always have the resources needed to collect statistically representative data across smaller clusters of a larger population. (The group identified two possible solutions.)

The Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-related Harmful Practices is committed to supporting future learning through praxis – the process of iterative learning through trialling new ideas, reflecting as a group on the insights generated, and then refining the next rounds of programming and data collection based on these reflections. Our goal is to engage with social norm theory and measurement with an eye toward reducing harmful gender-related practices, and, more specifically, an emphasis on preventing intimate partner violence.

**The group's learning objectives include further work on the following questions:**

1. What other constructs, along with norms, must be addressed to encourage shifts in behaviour?
2. In what different ways do norms influence practice (and vice versa) in the context of harmful gender-related practices?
3. Can we identify a streamlined approach to capture normative change quantitatively?
4. Are there ways to increase the trustworthiness of norms reporting and reduce social desirability bias?
5. How important is it to identify clearly the boundaries of the reference group?
6. Is there a low-cost way to capture variations in reported norms at the level of the neighbourhood, village or reference group, one that does not require large, costly surveys?

# CHALLENGES IN SOCIAL NORMS THEORY

Most of the scholars and practitioners who currently possess data on social norms and gender-based violence were guided in the first instance by the theoretical work on norms by Christina Bicchieri (UPenn)[1] and Gerry Mackie (UCSD)[2], popularised by UNICEF who also began to integrate their findings within UNICEF-supported programmes.

Here, we offer a short summary of this theoretical framework for those less familiar with it, noting that the debate on social norms (what they are and how they operate) is cross-disciplinary and multi-faceted. The framework presented here is one of the many that theorists have used to study and explain social norms and their influence over people's actions. Other frameworks, such as those from cultural anthropology and feminist theory, likely also have important implications for measurement and change. Mackie and colleagues (2015) offer an overview of the different disciplinary perspectives on social norms in their paper, *What are social norms? How are they measured?*

## AN INTRODUCTION

Social norms are behavioural rules shared by people in a given society or group; they define what is considered "normal" and appropriate behaviour for that group. They can influence, for instance, how people dress for a wedding, stand in line when buying something shake hands when meeting someone, say "bless you" when someone sneezes, offer their seat on the bus to someone older or speak quietly at the library, to cite a few examples. Social norms influence what people do both in familiar situations (because they know the rules) and in unfamiliar ones (because they do their best to learn the new rules and comply with them).

How do people know what rules – that is, what norms – exist to guide behaviour in a particular situation? They learn mostly from observing what happens around them and less through direct instruction. As they observe what happens in situation Y, people develop two beliefs:

1. What **other people do** (X) in situation Y; and
2. How **other people react** (including no reaction) when someone does X in situation Y.

As people see how others react to someone doing (or not doing) a certain thing, they form beliefs about what others think should be done: if others are happy and smile when someone does X, probably that's what they think should be done. Conversely, if others get angry or roll their eyes, it probably means they think X shouldn't be done. No reaction might suggest that a behaviour is acceptable for the situation.

Bicchieri calls the first type of belief (what others do) "**empirical expectations**" and the second type of belief (what others think should be done) "**normative**

1. See, for instance, Bicchieri, C. (2006). *The Grammar of Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. For example: UNICEF. (2008). Coordinated Strategy to Abandon Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in One Generation. New York: UNICEF; and: Mackie, G., Moneti, F., Shakya, H., & Denny, E. (2015). What are Social Norms? How are they measured? UNICEF and UCSD. New York.

**expectations**". Her articulation of the theory suggests that people prefer to comply with what people do in situation Y because they seek positive sanctions (e.g. approval) and fear negative sanctions (e.g. gossiping) from others. To sum up, then, a "social norm" is a preference to do X that people hold because:

1. They believe that others do X (empirical expectations);
2. They believe that others think they should also do X (normative expectations); and
3. They believe that if they comply with X others will sanction them positively (approve), and that if they do not comply with X others will sanction them negatively (disapprove).

Similar characterisations of norms are found elsewhere in the literature. The most notable is in the seminal work by social psychologist Cialdini, who calls the first type of belief (what others do) "descriptive norms" and the second type (what others think should be done) "injunctive norms".[3] While Cialdini believes that descriptive and injunctive norms are two different types of social norms, Bicchieri suggests that social norms are in place only when people hold both empirical and normative expectations.

Finally, Bicchieri suggests that norms apply within a "reference group"; that is, different groups of people have different rules. In Japan, the norm suggests that people dress in white at funerals, while in Italy people should preferably dress in black. So, as people move from Italy to Japan, they move across reference groups and might knowingly change their behaviour to comply with the different norms in place there.

As another example, in a rural African village, where two different ethnic groups coexist, different norms might apply within the two groups. People in each group would comply with the norms that exist within their own group, but would know that others outside of their group behave differently and approve of different things, adapting their actions when they meet them.

Even though the theory, as it is presented here in its most basic form, is relatively simple, its operationalisation in the field – and particularly in GBV interventions – presents challenges related to how change in social norms can be achieved and measured. Before the meeting, participants were asked to reflect on the challenges that they faced as they measured social norms change (see Box, page 7).

## OPERATIONALISING SOCIAL NORM THEORY

We grouped participants' reflections on their challenges in three different sets. The first set relates to asking the right questions. Participants hoped that the work of the group would help identify questions that would be both effective (tapping onto the right construct while reducing respondent biases) and efficient (keeping the number of questions required to measure norms relatively small). Some participants, for instance, mentioned they struggled to:

- Find a balance between asking enough questions to explore relevant norms and keeping data collection tools within a manageable length;
- Word questions so as to capture the social dynamics around the behaviours of interest;
- Generate unbiased and precise measures of behaviours and beliefs, especially around sensitive and sometimes socially censured attitudes or practices.

3. See for instance: Cialdini, R. B., Kallgren, C. A., & Reno, R. R. (1991). A focus theory of normative conduct: A theoretical refinement and reevaluation of the role of norms in human behaviour. Advances in experimental social psychology, 24(20), 1-243.

Participants' second set of challenges was connected to identifying the best way to analyse social norms data. Participants were interested to find ways to understand, with a good level of confidence, whether a norm exists in a given reference group or not. Two participants, for example, wrote:

■ How exactly, analytically, do we determine that there is a social norm using the questions we were able to ask?
■ How can we identify relevant reference groups and establish their relative influence on people's compliance with the norm?

The third and final set of challenges related to whether social norms work and measurement is worth the current investment of time and resources. Participants asked, for example:

■ It requires a lot of additional work and capacity to design, gather, and analyse this kind of social norms data. Are the resulting insights really worth the extra effort required?
■ How do we assess when it is worth exploring norms within the context of a survey, and when it is best to do so via qualitative research only?

Answers to some of these questions emerged in discussions and debates during the meeting. Others await further exploration by the group over the coming years.

## SHORT GLOSSARY OF SOCIAL NORMS TERMS

To help readers who are not familiar with social norm language engage meaningfully with the content of the report, we provide a table of key concepts.

| Table 1. Short glossary of social norms language | |
| --- | --- |
| **Social norms** | Rules of behaviour shared by members of a group or society, held in place by empirical and normative expectations and often enforced by social sanctions |
| **Empirical expectations** | People's beliefs about "what others do" |
| **Normative expectations** | People's beliefs about "what others think should be done" |
| **Social sanctions** | Positive or negative responses or reactions by others to the behaviour of an individual |
| | Examples of positive sanctions might include: smiling, patting on the shoulder or being granted higher status in the community |
| | Examples of negative sanctions might include: scolding, gossiping, threats or physical aggression |
| | People's anticipation of how others will respond in case of compliance (positive sanctions) or non-compliance (negative sanctions) is believed to affect their behaviour |
| **Reference groups** | The "others" whose behaviour and opinions matter in shaping a person's normative beliefs. For some behaviours, the boundaries of reference groups are distinctly defined. For norms that operate at the level of society or culture, the notion of reference group may be less relevant |
| **Personal attitudes** | People's individual preferences, independent of what others do or what is deemed to be appropriate; that is: what they would prefer to do if they could choose outside of a social context |

# COMMON CHALLENGES

## PARTICIPANTS' COMMON CHALLENGES

Before and during the meeting, participants identified some common challenges in their work on social norms:

- Grounding the social norms approach within a convincing framework of social change. Despite increasing interest in social norms, no integrated framework exists to help practitioners plan for multi-layered interventions.
- Developing effective questions to collect social norms data. Participants mentioned that they struggled to develop a tool that would ensure the collection of valid social norms data across contexts and for a variety of different norms. They needed good qualitative and quantitative questions that would confidently generate meaningful data.
- Implementing efficient systems for data collection. One important contribution would be a system to collect reliable data on social norms that could be integrated within NGOs' routine monitoring and evaluation practices. Participants envisioned a relatively small number of norms questions that would not overburden surveys and M&E systems.
- Identifying meaningful data analysis strategies. Participants wished for a system that could help them diagnose, with a reasonable level of confidence, whether a norm exists or not, within a given setting or reference group. This system would also need to include a strategy to identify correctly the appropriate reference group for each norm.
- Developing a measure of normative strength. Data suggesting the presence of a norm doesn't necessarily indicate the strength that norm exerts over people's actions and decisions. A method to evaluate normative strength over people's behaviours (other than prevalence of normative beliefs) would be extremely helpful to researchers and practitioners in the field.

## IS THE CURRENT FOCUS ON SOCIAL NORMS HELPFUL?

The influence of social norms on people's actions has been studied by sociologists, psychologists and behavioural scientists since the beginning of the 1950s. However, it is in the last ten years that social norm theory has garnered the attention of scholars and practitioners as a potentially useful tool for reducing gender-based violence (GBV) and other harmful practices. This interest was first sparked by work designed to address female genital cutting (FGC), which yielded insights that proved useful for helping change the dynamics that held that practice in place.[4] The number of grants and programme interventions trying to address social norms as a way to reduce GBV is increasing every year. But questions remain, including:

- How can we best evaluate the effectiveness of intervention that address social norms?
- What insights can we take from theory to improve evidence-informed practice?

4. See, for instance: Mackie, G., & LeJeune, J. (2009). *Social Dynamics of Abandonment of Harmful Practices: a New Look at the Theory* (Vol. 2009-06). Florence: Innocenti Research Centre.

## What we learned

Presentations by Lori Heise and Ben Cislaghi (LSHTM) sparked group conversations on the helpfulness and appropriateness of using social norms theory to refine and evaluate interventions related to GBV. There is little doubt that social norms theory has provided important insights that can help create better violence prevention interventions. We have learned, for instance, that campaigns that aim to emphasise the severity of the issue by highlighting the high levels of violence against women (e.g. 1 in 3 women have experienced intimate partner violence) might actually reinforce the perception that most men are violent (a perceived descriptive norm) in settings where the actual prevalence is much lower. This could loosen social controls on the practice, leading to a boomerang effect.

The presenters noted important distinctions between the FGC example and efforts to reduce other forms of GBV. In the case of FGC, the practice is the direct outcome of the norm itself. In certain areas of Senegal, for example, there is a well-established social rule that only girls who are cut are considered clean, worthy and suitable for marriage. Families that violate this norm (by keeping their girls intact) risk having their daughter considered unacceptable as a potential marriage partner for young men in their setting.

With other types of violence, however, there may or may not be a direct link between the practice and an accompanying norm. In the case of wife beating, for example, it is not always the case that people consider wife beating an obligatory social behaviour. Wife beating may be a common behaviour, and people may perceive it as such, thus meeting the definition of a descriptive norm as understood in social psychology. But it may or may not meet the threshold of being a social norm; that is, depending on the social context, men may or may not think that others expect them to beat their wives, and there may or may not be a clear negative social sanction or consequence for men who do not engage in the behaviour. Even if a pro-wife beating norm exists, it may not be the primary motivator for men's abusive behaviour in a particular context. Men might know they would be criticised or ridiculed by their friends for not beating their wives, but, if the beating typically takes place in a private space where others can't detect it, the norm may not be the key motivator for their violence. Doing this early type of diagnosis is an important element of applying a social norms lens to any harmful practice.

Heise and Cislaghi pointed out that even when there is not a clear social norm mandating a practice, social norm theory can nonetheless prove useful in a variety of ways; we cite three. First, harmful behaviours can be held in place by a matrix of norms and beliefs that together sustain a practice or behaviour and make it difficult to change (even if the practice itself is not normative). In the case of wife beating, for example, there may be no social rule mandating that husbands must use violence against their wives, but there may be ancillary norms that help maintain the practice – those related to social expectations of male authority in the family, family privacy, good wives' tolerance of violence; expectations that disobedience must be sanctioned and the belief that hitting is an acceptable form of discipline. Together, these and other social expectations can contribute to sustaining violence in relationships.

Second, even if a behaviour is not primarily driven by norms, programmes can use norm theory to try to create a new norm that would help shift behaviour in a more helpful direction. Frequently, it is easier to foster a new, helpful norm than it is to dislodge a harmful one.

Finally, just because an initial diagnosis suggests that a practice is not directly upheld by a norm (as FGC is), this does not mean that intervention is any less important. Indeed, behaviours are driven by many factors other than norms; factors that do not have a heavy normative influence are often *more* open to successful intervention. The behaviour could be driven by a false factual belief, material conditions (e.g. lack of an accessible health facility), a structural force or, most likely, some combination of the above.

Cislaghi and Heise suggested a framework to make sense of the interplay of different factors that drive behavioural regularities, illustrated in Figure 1. The framework distributes those factors into four different domains (individual, social, material and structural), emphasising the importance of examining the interplay of the factors sitting at the intersections between those domains. Norms, for instance, live at the intersection of the individual and the social domains. Individuals hold their own attitudes but they also observe the behaviour and beliefs of others, and they react to them. When individuals act under the influence of what they think others expect of them, they are operating in the realm of social norms.

When social norms exert their influence on a given practice, they can act as a brake on social change because they may inhibit changes in behaviour even when an individual changes their personal attitudes. Or they might act as accelerators, facilitating a change in the behaviour of those individuals whose personal attitudes haven't yet changed. This is why it is important that projects diagnose whether the practice is held in place by norms, because if norms are operative it is important to seek to shift the normative beliefs of most of the reference group (if not all of it). However, norm change alone cannot always guarantee success as other factors may well be at play in sustaining a given practice.

## Where next

Group members discussed the role of these other important factors. Among these, power is essential though often missing from the current norms discourse. Cislaghi and Heise suggested that its importance is twofold. First, since norms affect groups (as well as individuals) group members engage in internal negotiations to decide whether to comply or not with the norm (think of a family deciding to comply with the norm of FGC). Within the group, however, power relations exist that will influence the outcome of those negotiations. Secondly, some norms persist because people who derive status and power from them enforce their compliance.

If power is so important and yet often missing from the thinking around norms interventions, what other important contributing factors should practitioners be aware of? Group members agreed that we need a framework that practitioners can use to diagnose and act upon the multiple factors, including social norms, which help sustain violence. The proposed framework for behaviour change (Figure 1) offers one way for programme planners to consider the range of factors that may contribute to a practice (Cislaghi and Heise, in preparation).

In addition to the challenge of embedding norms within other relevant factors, group members discussed the need to explore the various tools and strategies for collecting and analysing data on social norms. The theory of social norms does not offer guidance when it comes to carrying out data collection, especially when that data collection is but a small part of the work that practitioners are doing in the field. While scholars can sometimes afford the luxury of conducting extensive studies on social norms, NGOs need practical ways to collect data on norms, both to diagnose norms and measure their change?

Figure 1: Framework for behaviour change



**Structural**
e.g. Laws – family inheritance, property
Institutions
Governance structures (political representation)
Economic policy (tax structure, social protection, job market)
Criminal justice system

**Global**
e.g. Rising consumerism
Globalisation
Technological innovation
Ideologies (human rights, fundamentalism)

**Material**
e.g. Availability of services
Transport/Infrastructure
Available assets (property, land, jobs, livestock)

**POWER GENDER**

**Individual**
e.g. Factual beliefs
Aspirations
Skills
Attitudes
Self-efficacy

**Social**
e.g. Social networks and support
Availability of models
Positive deviants

**Individual**

**Intersection**
(e.g. social norms)

**Social**

## WHAT TOOLS CAN PRACTITIONERS USE TO QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY DIAGNOSE SOCIAL NORMS?

The group agreed that conducting qualitative formative research to diagnose social norms is crucial to implementing effective interventions in the field. NGO practitioners would benefit from resource-effective tools and practices to understand if a given behaviour is under normative influence so that they can adapt their interventions accordingly. These tools and practices must be designed to allow for integration within practitioners' formative research and routine M&E activities.

### What we learned

Nabou Diouf from Tostan presented some vignettes and direct questions on social norms and FGC that Tostan used as part of their baseline, midline and endline studies. She also offered examples of answers provided by study participants. (See Table 2)

In the Tostan method, vignettes are used both in focus group discussions (FGDs) and in depth interviews (IDIs). Data are analysed looking for – among other things – differences between responses given by participants during FGDs and IDIs.

Leigh Stefanik presented a framework developed by CARE USA to investigate social norms in the field: the "Social Norms Analysis Plot – SNAP" (paper to be available on CARE Gender Wiki). SNAP was not created as a diagnostic tool as it aims to help practitioners identify changes in social norms and validate norms identified by CARE

| Table 2. An example from Tostan's vignettes and questions | |
|---|---|
| **Vignette (normative expectations)** | **Examples of answers** |
| Now, we would like to give you a scenario. Imagine Penda is a woman who lives in this village. She is not a real person who lives here; this is just an example. Imagine Penda, as we have said, a woman from the village, has a six-year-old daughter. Penda would like to have her cut. In your opinion, what would be the reaction of the other members of the community to this news? [explore reasons for positive and negative reactions] | The reason the other community members would respond with happiness to the news that Penda decided to cut her daughter is because it [FGC] is a very old practice here. It's why they would tell her that her daughter must be cut [...] Members of the family would say to do a collective cutting, including all of the girls who had not yet been cut in the family (adult female, village 3)<br><br>In our village, it is unusual to find a girl who is not cut who gets married (focus group women, village 1)<br><br>Ah, since I was born here, people have always said that FGC makes a girl pure (young man, village 4) |
| **Direct questions (empirical expectations)** | **Examples of answers** |
| Speaking of marriage, people in other villages told us that in marriage, female genital cutting is a prerequisite and that they practised cutting because they want their daughters to be able to get married. In other villages, we were given other reasons. For example, a girl who is cut is considered pure. In other villages, we were told that cutting is unheard of. In your opinion, do most people practice circumcision in this village? [explore reasons for practice] | Oh, FGC, there were moments in the past where we even practised it in groups. There were lots of people. But now, where we are today, lots of things are changing, and with that change, some do practise a little, but there are also those who don't want to practise (adult male, village 7)<br><br>We have grown up with the practice, people say that it purifies a girl. Before we said that FGC protects a girl against uncontrollable sexual behaviour but now we say that it has no positive effect on sexuality. We have learned that in today's world we advise people to not practise FGC because it is a dangerous practice. It is why we no longer cut girls here (adult male, village 4) |

practitioners through other tools of formative research. However, it can also be used to create effective vignettes to explore whether a given behaviour is under normative influence.

First, the tool introduces study participants to the scenario – the hypothetical context in which the behaviour or practice takes place. It then explores participants' empirical and normative expectations related to that behaviour or practice. Next, it introduces a twist in the narration (the main character or another character does not comply with the norm) that sets the stage for two questions on (first) the sanctions that participants anticipate for the non-complying character and (second) the non-complying character's sensitivity to those sanctions. Finally, it includes a question that explores acceptable departures from the norm.

| Table 3. Adapted from CARE's SNAP tool – CARE's original version available in Annex 4 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **CARE's Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP)** | | **Example of a vignette from CARE's presentation** |
| Narration | **Setting the background** | Participants are introduced to the scenario: The main character is faced with a situation when a social norm under diagnosis would come into play, and he/she needs to decide whether or not to comply. | I will tell you a story of a girl I will call Rehima […] One day Hindiya, Rehima's cousin comes over to visit Rehima's family. They are both about 16. Hindiya announces that she is engaged and getting married in a month's time. She also strongly suggests to Rehima that she should also marry soon as she is getting old for marriage. Hindiya reveals that she also knows someone from their village who is interested in marrying Rehima. |
| Question | **Empirical expectations (What I think others do)** | Participants are asked what they think others in their setting would do if they were the main character (or another character engaging in the behaviour of interest). articipants are asked what they think others in their setting would do if they were the main character (or another character engaging in the behaviour of interest). | 1. What would most adolescent girls in Rehima's position do in this situation? |
| Question | **Normative expectations (What I think others expect me to do)** | Participants are asked what they think others in their settings expect the main character (or another character engaging in the behaviour of interest) to do. | 2. What would Hindiya and most other girls expect Rehima to do in this situation? |
| Narration | **Non-compliance of the main character** | Participants are presented a twist in the narration: The main character (or a new character) does not comply with the (potential) norm. | But Rehima doesn't want to marry young. She announces that she does not want marry at this age. |
| Question | **Sanctions (Anticipated positive or negative reactions to non-compliance)** | Participants are asked about the opinion or reaction of others (to the non-compliance) – specifically others whose opinions matter to participants. | 3. What would Hindiya and most other girls say about Rehima's decision? |
| Question | **Sensitivity to sanctions (Strength of sanctions over decision to comply or non-comply)** | Participants are asked: If the character incurs negative sanctions for non-compliance, would he/she comply in the future. | 4. Would the opinions and reactions of her peers make Rehima change her mind about refusing the marriage? |
| Question | **Exceptions** | Participants are asked: Under what circumstances would it be okay for the non-complying character to break the norm. | 5. Are there any circumstances where it would be considered more or less acceptable for Rehima not to get married at her age? |

Stefanik reported that the vignettes worked particularly well and generated data meaningful in ways that direct questions would not have.

Nancy Glass and Nancy Perrin of Johns Hopkins University (JHU) also used vignettes in both focus group discussions and survey questions to diagnose norms that hide, maintain or encourage violence. They also used the same vignette (a girl being raped – see below), varying the identity of the hypothetical perpetrator to identify possible differences in participants' responses: did participant think that rape is more or less acceptable according to who perpetrates it?

| Vignette | Follow-up questions |
|---|---|
| A family lives in an internally displaced person (IDP) settlement in Mogadishu. The family consists of mother, father, 6-year-old daughter, 15-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter. The 12-year-old daughter is one day raped by a militiaman [alternative perpetrators: neighbour, stranger from another village] who entered their *buul* forcefully. The daughter tells her mother what happened to her, and the mother tells father that their daughter was raped. The mother wants to report the incident but the father is shocked and requests that the rape is kept as a secret. | **1.** Do you believe the rape should be kept as a secret? [Advantages and Disadvantages of keeping it a secret] <br> **2.** Do you believe the rape should be reported? Probe: To whom would you report? [Advantages and Disadvantages of reporting it] <br> **3.** Do you believe the mother should have kept it as a secret from the father? <br> **4.** Do you believe other mothers should keep it a secret from their husbands? <br> **5.** Do you believe that other family members would like to keep this a secret? <br> **6.** Do you believe other mothers will expect the mother to keep it secret? <br> **7.** Do you think other mothers believe the mother is doing good by telling to the husband? <br> **8.** What are the things a father can do if he is told that his daughter has been raped? |

These vignettes begin by investigating the broad fabric of social beliefs sustaining violence, asking participants about advantages and disadvantages of not reporting a rape [questions 1 and 2]. More 'traditional' questions about what people believe others do and expect from them follow [questions 4–7].

The idea of asking participants about the advantages and disadvantages of complying with a practice [JHU questions 1 and 2 above] holds interesting potential in that it can uncover norms exerting both direct and indirect influence over a practice.

When we say that a practice X is under **direct normative influence** we mean that people comply with it because they believe that others 1) do X, 2) expect them to do X and 3) anticipate sanctions if they don't do X. For instance: people practice FGC because they believe that others 1) practice FGC; 2) expect them to practice it; and 3) will criticise or otherwise sanction them if they do not. Most work on social norms has so far approached practices as if they were directly influenced by norms.

When we say that a practice is under **indirect normative influence** we mean that other norms are contributing to sustaining X. For instance: in some contexts, people hit their spouse in part because they know that others won't intervene due to strong norms of family privacy.

This is a useful distinction because it can help improve formative research meant to help design better interventions. When the practitioners know that the practice and the norm are directly related, their diagnostic work would explore how the norm X shapes participants' lives. Questions that would be answered by this work would be, for instance:

- Is there heterogeneity in the norm?
- Is there any pocket of contestation?
- Are sanctions strong or weak?

The vignettes methods above would be appropriate. For instance, if one is working under the hypothesis that FGC is sustained by people's beliefs that 1) others practice FGC and 2) others expect them to practice FGC and will potentially sanction them for not complying, practitioners could use vignettes like those presented by Tostan and CARE (which seem to work better than direct questions).

But practitioners might not know what norms (if any at all) are contributing to sustaining the practice of interest. In such cases, they would need to investigate the wider system of norms that might interact to sustain the practice: What norms are contributing to a practice that practitioners need to address in their work?

To answer this, programme staff and formative researchers need to find ways to engage participants in a wider discussion about the range of interlocking beliefs and norms that bear on the behaviour. One option is to explore the consequences for people's lives that might accompany compliance or non-compliance with certain other related norms (e.g. related to female purity, family privacy, male authority in the family, etc.). JHU's ideas of probing the social advantages and disadvantages of complying with a practice or not offers a good example.

### Where next

The work by JHU (Glass and Perry) offers a good example of how vignettes can be integrated with direct focus group questions, and the SNAP tool by CARE (Stefanik) will be useful for practitioners interested in creating new vignettes on social norms. Vignettes are a valid alternative to asking participants questions that would be otherwise difficult to understand in abstract form (e.g. do you think others think you should do X?). **It's very important for vignettes to be realistic**, presenting participants with scenarios that are familiar to them. Doing so requires good knowledge of the cultural milieu and practitioners will want to secure the help of cultural insiders in their first draft. Vignettes are currently being used primarily **to uncover direct normative influence over certain behaviours and practices**. Going forward, researchers should explore methods to uncover norms that indirectly contribute, together with other factors, to sustaining a practice. Likewise, they should seek to understand the relative strength of norms compared to other contributing factors. These approaches would help to understand the potential of creating new (or strengthen existing) positive norms to counteract negative behaviours.

## WHAT SIMPLE, QUICK, 'ACCURATE-ENOUGH' MEASURES OF SOCIAL NORMS CAN BE USED IN THE FIELD?

Even though attempts to measure social norms began long ago, recent evolution in social norms theory as well as in the programmatic approach to norm change require new measurement tools and strategies. The two current main challenges to measuring social norms are: 1) finding the right questions and strategies to collect meaningful and reliable data; and 2) identifying resource-efficient data collection strategies that can be integrated within already overstretched M&E systems or that can help practitioners rethink some elements of their existing M&E system.

## What we learned

Claire Hughes (Itad) and Elaine Denny (UCSD) presented methods and results from their study of social norms in Nigeria (under the project Voices for Change). To identify and measure norms, they adapted the theoretical framework first proposed by Gerry Mackie and colleagues, which requires collecting data on one behavioural outcome and five types of beliefs that individuals might hold:

1. what one does (the outcome behaviour/practice);
2. what one thinks they should do;
3. what one thinks others do;
4. what one thinks others should do;
5. what one thinks others think they do;
6. what one thinks others think they should do.

| Table 4. Voices for Change framework to measure social norms | | |
|---|---|---|
| **What Self Believes About** | | |
| | **Self** | **Others – 1st Order** | **Others – 2nd Order** |
| **Empirical Expectations** | A: What I do (outcome behaviour) | B: What others do | C: What others think I do |
| **Normative Expectations** | D: What I think I should do | E: What I think others should do | F: What others think I should do |

This study generated enough data to make confident claims about the existence of norms of violence across four different regions in Nigeria. However, the investigators suggested that asking six questions for each potential norm was extremely time and resource intensive. Also, people had a difficult time understanding the distinctions presented in the matrix. The results of the group conversations that followed suggested that practitioners might only need to focus on quadrants "B and F". In other words: **people do not need to measure these six constructs for each norm**.

Another attempt to dive into the details and complexity of norms measurement is the work of Nancy Perrin and Nancy Glass (JHU). They developed a norms scale to capture change accompanying a UNICEF-sponsored project, known as Communities Care, being evaluated in South Sudan and Somalia. This project was designed to address norms around sexual violence in conflict and humanitarian emergencies and they developed a norms scale to capture change over time. Even though the development of the psychometric scale was an important learning experience, their work suggests that stand-alone questions (rather than scales) may be sufficient for measuring normative influence.

Their measures included questions on: 1) empirical expectations; 2) personal beliefs; and 3) normative expectations. Data were collected with these three measures for four different dimensions of sexual violence in conflict. Note that in asking questions about the reference group, they used the phrase "people whose opinion matters most to you".

| Table 5. Measures of Social Norms used in the Communities Care Project | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Empirical expectations | Personal beliefs | Normative expectations |
| Now we would like to know what people in your community actually do. I will be reading you statements. | Now we would like to know if you think any of the following statements are wrong and should be changed in your community. We would like to understand how ready or willing you are to take action by speaking out in public on issues you think are wrong. | I will be reading you a statement and asking you to think about the people whose opinion matters most to you when responding to the statement. |
| For instance: how many men in your community wash the dishes instead of their wives: 1) None, 2) Some, 3) Many or 4) Most of the people in your community wash the dishes instead of their wives. | Do you: 1) agree with this statement 2) not sure if you agree or disagree 3) disagree but are not ready to tell others that you disagree 4) are telling others that this is wrong | For example, how many of the people who are important to you expect women but not men to wash dishes? 1) none, 2) A few, 3) About half of them, 4) Most of them, 5) all of these people expect women but not men to wash dishes. |

Interestingly, they added an additional dimension to their personal belief question that incorporates people's readiness to act on their beliefs. The response codes ask, Do you:

**1.** Agree with this statement
**2.** Not sure if you agree or disagree
**3.** Disagree but are not ready to tell others that you disagree
**4.** Are telling others that this is wrong

Their experience in Somalia suggest that people were able to place themselves along this continuum. The advantages of this approach in terms of evaluation is that it allows evaluators to potentially capture more finely grained movements along a change trajectory.

This adaptation is part of a larger strategy adopted by the JHU team, namely to combine social norms theory with insights from the Transtheoretical Stages of Change Model first articulated by Pochaska and Di-Clemente (Procheska et al 1994). Glass and Perrin set out to detect changes in each of their constructs (empirical expectations; normative expectations, etc.) by examining and measuring people's actions along a change continuum. They used the Stages of Change model to create response categories along the following lines:

**1.** No thought of
**2.** Think I need to consider
**3.** I think I should but I am not ready
**4.** Starting to think about it
**5.** I am taking action.

The group felt that this is a productive avenue for further exploration.

A simpler approach was used by Holly Shakya in her study of social norms around adolescent fertility in rural Honduras. She tested various measurement strategies and refined her methods three times before identifying one that would work well. At first, she tried asking participants:

| Table 6. Holly Shakya – First attempt | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Empirical expectations | Normative expectations | Sanctions |
| Fathers in your community attend pregnancy check-ups with their pregnant wives/companions<br><br>1 = No<br>2 = Yes sometimes<br>3 = Yes mostly<br>4 = Yes always | The people in your community believe that fathers should attend pregnancy check-ups with their pregnant wives/companions<br><br>1 = No<br>2 = Yes sometimes<br>3 = Yes mostly<br>4 = Yes always | If a father in your community does not attend pregnancy check-ups with his pregnant wife/companion others in the community will criticise him.<br><br>1 = No<br>2 = Yes sometimes<br>3 = Yes mostly<br>4 = Yes always |

Participants didn't understand these questions, and having a question on both the sanctions and normative expectations ended up being repetitive. So, in her second attempt, she: 1) simplified the questions on normative expectations and sanctions; and 2) simplified possible answers to the questions by reducing them to yes or no:

| Table 7. Holly Shakya – Second attempt | |
| --- | --- |
| Empirical expectations | Normative expectations/Sanctions |
| Fathers in your community help care for their sick children by taking them to the health unit, giving medicine, or feeding them. | If a father in your community does not accompany his wife/companion to the clinic for the birth of their child, others in the community will criticise him<br><br>1 = Yes<br>2 = No |

What she found when using this second set of questions, is that participants tended to be biased towards answering yes and that they were confused by the first question because it asked them to report on multiple behaviours at once ("taking them to the health unit, giving medicine, or feeding them"). How could the questions remain simple and yet reduce potential biases? Holly adapted her method again; her final choice eventually worked well in the field:

| Table 8. Holly Shakya – Final questions | |
| --- | --- |
| Empirical expectations | Normative expectations/Sanctions |
| Do men in this community hit their wives/partners?<br><br>1 = Never<br>2 = Rarely<br>3 = Sometimes<br>4 = Always | If a father in your community does not help care for his sick children, will people in the community think it is good, bad or neither?<br><br>1 = Good<br>2 = Bad<br>3 = Neither |

Two things stand out in Holly's final method. First, the question on empirical expectations above doesn't ask people about "how many" in their communities do X, but only "how often" people generally do X. Future work should discuss whether questions on empirical expectations should explore frequency (how often do people do X in this community), prevalence (how many people do X in this community) or both. This may depend on whether the practice in question is a repeated or once off behaviour.

Second, the question on normative expectation is framed *negatively* (if a father *doesn't* help …). It is very important for practitioner to decide whether they want to frame their question positively or negatively. In certain cases, when "doing X" triggers positive sanctions, it doesn't mean that "not doing X" triggers negative ones.

Consider the example of a person deciding whether to bring a cake to work on her birthday. Asked whether her colleagues will think that's good, bad or neither, she might say that her colleague would think that's good. That, however, is not sufficient indication of normative influence; that is, we don't have enough evidence to know if a norm around bringing birthday cakes exists in that particular workplace. The person we are surveying might just think that her colleague would be favourably surprised by a cake. The only thing that we can infer from the evidence, so far, is that there are **no norms against** taking a cake to work (in the language of theory, there is no *proscriptive* norm). But is there a norm that demands that people take a birthday cake at work (a *prescriptive* norm)? To determine whether there is indeed a norm, we should frame the question negatively (e.g. If a person doesn't bring a cake at work on her birthday will her colleagues think it's good, bad or neither?). In other words, when we create a questionnaire, we need to be sure of whether we want to investigate norms against X or norms demanding that people do X. That choice can be informed by qualitative evidence, existing data, or field observations. **It is important, however, that when evidence shows that X is acceptable and there are no norms against X (no *proscriptive* norms against X), researchers do not interpret this as an indication that there exist norms demanding X.**

CARE used a different method to measure empirical and normative expectations around IPV in Sri Lanka. While their questions on empirical expectations matched those used by most group members, CARE decided to measure normative expectations by asking participants the commonness of a list of attitudes.

| Table 9. CARE's measures of social norms | |
|---|---|
| Empirical expectations | Normative expectations/Sanctions |
| Please tell me how much the following activities are prevalent in your neighbourhood. Do you think such practices/activities and incidents are very prevalent, can be seen sometimes or rarely? | I am going read out some attitudes prevalent in our society towards men and women. Could you please tell me to what extent such attitudes exist among the people in your neighbourhood? |
| "Practices/activities and incidents" were: | "Attitudes" were: |
| ■ Husbands scolding their wives. <br> ■ Husbands beating their wives. <br> ■ Wife keeping silent so as to not prolong a domestic fight. <br> ■ Neighbours intervening to advise the wife to keep silent to not to prolong fight | ■ A man who is not tough enough does not command respect at home. <br> ■ A man who beats his wife has no place in his neighbourhood. <br> ■ During an argument, a man who listens to his wife's point of view, is considered as being 'not manly enough' by his neighbours and relatives. <br> ■ A woman who talks back at her husband earns a bad reputation among relatives. |
| Very prevalent \| Sometimes observable \| Rarely observable \| Do not know | Great extent \| To some extent \| Does not exist \| Do not know |

The questions that CARE used to measure normative expectations are interesting, because they ask participants if four specific sanctions would follow four behaviours (See Table below).

| Table 10. Behaviour/Sanction relation in CARE's study | |
|---|---|
| Behaviour (if one does X) | Sanction (others will Y) |
| Men don't command at home | Others won't consider them tough enough |
| Men beat their wives | Others will think there is no place for them in their neighbourhood |
| Men listen to their wives' point of view | Others won't consider them manly enough |
| Women talk back to their husbands | Others will think badly of them (She will get a bad reputation). |

In other words, instead of asking participants if people would approve or disapprove of them doing X, or if people expect that they do X, CARE asked participants if they thought that sanction Y would follow X. This is an interesting approach and deserves consideration, because it could lead to finding ways to ask simple and practical questions on social norms, provided that it is grounded within a qualitative understanding of what sanctions are attached to a given practice in a specific context.

However, even with that preliminary understanding, anticipated sanctions might vary from one setting to another or from one person to another. Thus, a question that asks "Are men who don't command at home considered not tough enough?" might generate unreliable data, particularly in larger multi-country and cross-cultural data collection efforts (such as DHS, for instance). Do people who say "no" mean that there are no negative sanctions associated with not commanding at home, or that there are other sanctions than the one proposed? A participant might believe that "commanding at home" has nothing to do with "toughness" but that these men will be ridiculed anyhow. Asking about sanctions for non-compliance seems intuitively a good strategy but constraining the question to one sanction seems potentially problematic.

A possible solution comes from the routine M&E approach presented by Tostan International that measures normative expectations by asking participants what they anticipate to be people's reactions when they do X (e.g. cut their daughter). Possible answers that respondents can give are: others would have a positive reaction, they would be indifferent, they would have a negative reaction, they would do something to convince me to change my mind. The questions by Tostan, in other words, ask participants if a certain action is likely to result in positive sanctions, negative sanctions or neither.

| Table 11. Tostan's questions on normative expectations | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What would be the reaction of your family members if they knew you were going to: | Positive | Indifferent | Negative | Intervene to change | Doesn't know Doesn't answer |
| Baptise your child | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 99 |
| Leave to work in the city | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 99 |
| Spank your child to discipline | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 99 |
| Give your 14-year-old daughter away in marriage | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 99 |
| Throw garbage in a public space | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 99 |
| Eat meat every day | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 99 |
| Go abroad for work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 99 |
| Have your daughter cut | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 99 |
| Buy a car | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 99 |
| Get married | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 99 |
| Visit family members every two months | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 99 |
| Build your house on the outskirt of the village | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 99 |

Note that Tostan mixes the more sensitive questions (on FGC, child marriage and child discipline) among less contentious ones. This has two goals. The first is to divert participants' attention from the issues Tostan is interested in, hoping to reduce bias. The second is to control participants' understanding of the question: since the Tostan staff have detailed ethnographic evidence and knowledge of the cultural context to know what answers to the non-sensitive questions are most likely to be, they look at participants' answers to these questions to see if they have understood the question at all. What is interesting in the Tostan method is that it asks specifically what the reaction of a given reference group (in this case the family) would be to an action carried out by the participant. This way, they can test the influence of one or more given groups on a participant's decisions to do X. Tostan reported that these questions worked well in their surveys at baseline and midline, and that they will soon have the full dataset to report on.

However, one should note that measuring the presence of normative beliefs and measuring the influence of those normative beliefs over people's actions are two different things. The fact that a participant's family would react positively or negatively to his/her decision of X might not influence what the participant does in the end. A norm might exist, and yet might not be exerting a strong influence on a person's choice to do something. Tostan does collect data to understand possible normative influence over actions. They ask participants about their actual decision to X or not (for FGC and child marriage, they would isolate parents who have daughters of the right ages), and then look for correlations between doing X and holding normative expectations towards X.

This is not the only way to study causal pathways between norms and actions. Qualitative vignettes, for instance, have proven to offer compelling evidence of causal links between norms and practices. CARE's SNAP, for instance, generates this kind of data through exploring people's sensitivity to sanctions. Can vignettes be integrated into quantitative surveys to measure social norms and their influence on people's actions?

Bob Blum and Linnea Zimmerman (JHU) presented on their multi-country GEAS study, where they experimented with measuring gender norms and gender equitable relationships among young adolescents (ages 9–14) through the use of vignettes (see an example below).

| Table 12. An example from a vignette used in the GEAS study | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Vignette** | **Possible answers** | |
| P is in 7th grade. She is attracted to A, who is in the same grade, but she doesn't know him and has never spoken with him in person. Most of her friends have boyfriends but she has never had one before. She wants to get his attention, but is not sure how. | What do you think she is most likely to do?<br>■ Ask a friend to tell A that P likes him<br>■ Pass him a note<br>■ Tease him<br>■ Go up and talk to him directly<br>■ Nothing, just wait hoping she will meet him | What do you think you would do in that situation?<br>■ Ask a friend to tell A that you like him<br>■ Pass A a note<br>■ Tease him<br>■ Go up and talk to A directly<br>■ Nothing, just wait hoping you will meet him |

Quantitative surveys are often longer, more fast-paced and less interactive than qualitative discussions, and might not always allow the interviewer the time she needs to establish a relationship of trust with the interviewee, which might increase the risk of social bias. The vignette approach might help, making it easier for participants to respond honestly to questions about a vignette character, as compared to questions about their own lives. In addition to reducing risk of bias, vignettes could also help when researchers want to test a hypothesis experimentally. For instance, 50% participants could be surveyed with a vignette about a man living in rural India who argues with his wife because she's disrespected him. She deserves to be beaten, he thinks, and so he does beat her. He then leaves the household, meets a group of male friends and neighbours and tell them that his wife disrespected him. They then ask: what did you do to her? Participants would be asked: "Is he going to say that he beat her or not?" [Yes, No, Doesn't Know/Doesn't Answer]. And: "What will his friends think of the fact that he's beaten his wife?" [approve; disapprove; they will be indifferent]. And again: The remaining 50% of participants could be asked about the opposite situation where the man does not beat his wife. Will he tell the truth?

Different reference groups could also be tested with different participants: what if, instead of meeting his male friends and neighbours, the man who hit his wife met the wife's family? Or some random colleagues? Or some male police officers? Used in surveys, vignettes can help test a few hypotheses about existing norms without being stuck in the prescriptive/proscriptive impasse (because they allow for testing both) and with the advantage of testing reactions with different groups. This way, vignettes would help establish possible cause/effect relationships between normative beliefs and actual behaviour.

Finally, some group members pointed out that we should investigate further whether asking participants to think about what "people whose opinion matters to you" think and do is the most helpful way of measuring norms. Observations conducted by a few members showed that, in certain field situations, people are not afraid of being sanctioned by their close friends or families as much as they fear being gossiped about by neighbours and acquaintances.

## Where next

Using vignettes in surveys is a relatively novel approach in social norm measurement, but it bears promising potential. Christine Horne and colleagues[5] used a vignette method similar to the one described above to test two hypotheses on social norms and bridewealth in Ghana and obtained good empirical results. We know that complex, multiple questions are either too difficult to understand or too time intensive to be adopted by practitioners in the field at scale. We need to identify simple questions that can fit within routine M&E systems without encumbering them.

In a seminal study conducted in 33 nations, Gelfand and colleagues[6] developed a "situational constraint measure". In spite of the name, the measure works actually very simply: researchers asked participants to rate the appropriateness of ten actions on a scale from 1 (extremely inappropriate) to 6 (extremely appropriate). These included: Eat in an elevator; Talk in the library; Swear at the workplace; Flirt at a funeral; Sing on the sidewalk; and Kiss on the mouth in a restaurant, to cite a few. They used the data (together with those collected with other measures) to derive conclusions about the cultural normative "tightness" or "looseness" of the 33 countries where they conducted their study. Some study participants have found it difficult to answer to questions such as the one above. As an alternative, some researchers have found that using simple diagrams, such as those depicting ladders, and asking respondents to identify a level on that ladder, are not only appealing to respondents but are easier to understand and respond to. Similar single-question M&E-friendly measures are urgently needed in the field. As part of the work of this group, we will look for similarly simple measurement solutions to evaluate.

In particular, we might test different sets of questions in the same cultural setting with distinct sets of participants. Ideally, we would be measuring the same norm using a variety of methods and then analysing the data in conjunction with ethnographic evidence to understand which measures work best. We might for instance compare:

1. Using vignettes with different reference groups and testing prescriptive and proscriptive norms;
2. Measures limited to anticipation of sanctions;
3. Asking whether X and non-X are acceptable.

Finally, we plan to test how normative influence might vary by reference group. This will allow us to uncover potential differences in the ways in which a person's normative expectations towards 1) unspecified others and/or 2) friends/family/people-who-matter-to-them can influence that person's decision to engage in acts of violence against women and girls.

5. Horne, C., Dodoo, F. N. A., & Dodoo, N. D. (2013). The Shadow of Indebtedness: Bridewealth and Norms Constraining Female Reproductive Autonomy. *American Sociological Review*, 78(3), 503-520. doi:10.1177/0003122413484923

6. Gelfand, M. J., Raver, J. L., Nishii, L., Leslie, L. M., Lun, J., Lim, B. C., Yamaguchi, S. (2011). Differences between tight and loose cultures: a 33-nation study. *Science*, 332(6033), 1100-1104. doi:10.1126/science.1197754

## WHAT PITFALLS AND OPPORTUNITIES EXIST IN ANALYSING NORMS DATA?

The analysis of social norms data presents numerous challenges. One is to identify the right social level at which data should be analysed. If norms apply within reference groups, then data aggregated at a national level will not be representative of how people are actually behaving under normative influence within a group.

Imagine you want to understand what norms exist around drinking alcohol in American colleges and collected data from JHU and UCSD. Aggregated data show that 50% of the students believe their peers approve of them drinking and 50% believe their peers don't. You might thus be tempted to conclude that, if there are norms in place, they are shifting. But let's hypothesise now that disaggregated data would show that students from JHU believe that 100% of their peers approve of them drinking, while 0% of students from UCSD endorse drinking. If you wanted to plan a social norms intervention in American colleges, you would prefer to possess the college-disaggregated data.

The same would apply, for instance, to violence in low-income countries. Take violence in Nigeria, for instance. Before they decide the appropriate level of disaggregation, researchers and practitioners should come up with a hypothesis on the extent to which a person in Southern Nigeria cares about the norms that exist in Northern Nigeria. Hence, to understand normative change, rather than knowing what percentage of the population holds certain normative beliefs, we would need to know what percentage of the reference groups in that population hold normative beliefs supporting or opposing the behaviour that we hope to see changed. Social network analysis can offer robust opportunities to identify reference groups and uncover the possible normative influence of a variety of reference groups on the behaviour of an individual.
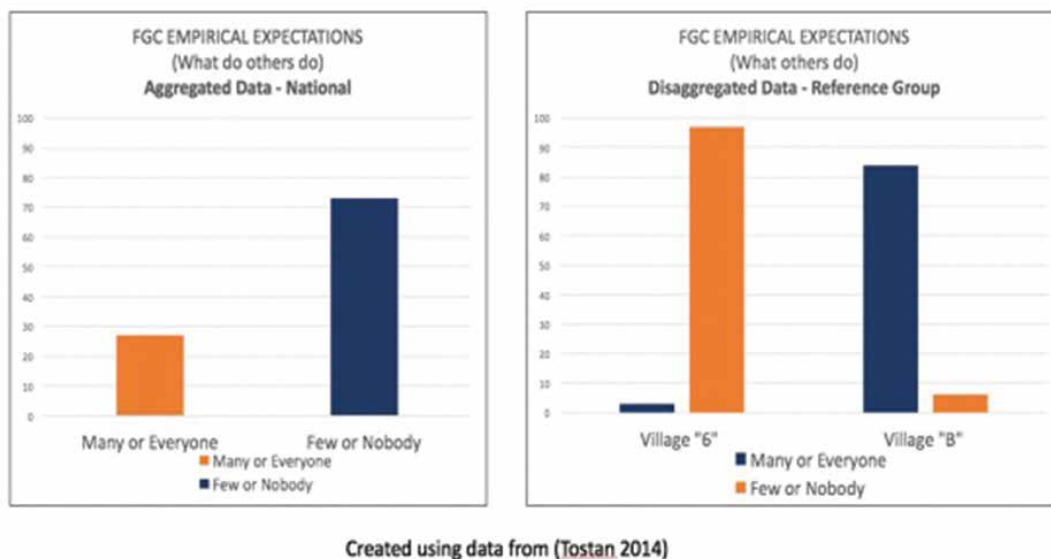
### What we learned

Tostan, and Itad with UCSD (Voices for Change project) offered some interesting insights into data analysis practices. Their studies demonstrate that empirical and normative expectations vary greatly between settings – an important observation for both programme design and measurement of change. As shown in their presentation, disaggregating data at the cluster, village, or regional level showed significant variations in response that would have been invisible if data were aggregated at a national level (data were disaggregated at the village level by Tostan and the Regional level by Itad/UCSD).

The Tostan data exemplify this problem particularly well. When they first collected data on empirical expectations on FGC (what participants said others in their villages did), the Tostan staff could not make much sense of what the evidence was uncovering. Even though their observations suggested that villages varied greatly in their practices, the data showed that about 70% of the population thought others didn't practice, while the remaining 30% thought almost everyone did. It seemed unusual that participants' understandings of the practice could vary so much in the same context.

Clarity came when the data were disaggregated. Once considered at the reference group level (in this case at the village level), data often showed differences in what people declared according to their village of origin. In other words, aggregated data covered an important finding: that some reference groups were close to total abandonment, whereas others showed strong compliance with the practice (see the figure below).

**Figure 2. Difference between data aggregated at national and reference group level**



FGC EMPIRICAL EXPECTATIONS
(What do others do)
Aggregated Data - National

FGC EMPIRICAL EXPECTATIONS
(What others do)
Disaggregated Data - Reference Group

Created using data from (Tostan 2014)

Thus, as practitioners, Tostan staff members became interested in understanding the percentage of "reference groups" where the greater majority of the interviewees held empirical and normative expectations against the practice, NOT the crude percentage of people in the larger population that held empirical or normative expectations against FGC. The interesting evidence was no longer "x% of the Senegalese population holds normative expectations against FGC", but rather "y% of the villages surveyed showed strong normative expectations against FGC". Using social network analysis, these sorts of insights can be sharpened even more, as socially meaningful groups of people within larger social structures such as villages can be identified, allowing a more objective understanding of reference groups beyond geographic grouping.

Tostan could conduct this disaggregation with a fairly satisfactory statistical power in the smallest of the sampled communities. However, Baltimore meeting participants pointed out that not all NGOs can generate statistical power at this small level of disaggregation without increasing the sample size to numbers that would require excessive M&E resources. NGOs also need to collect data on the wider population. Thus, the field needs to identify resource-effective strategies to collect data that are representative of both the wider sample and the reference groups within it.

## Where next

There seem to be at least two effective ways to collect data that are meaningful both at the reference group level and at the level of the larger population. First, practitioners could adopt a double sampling strategy; that is, they could sample as they do for their routine M&E procedures, and then create a second larger sample at the reference group level to be surveyed only with the social norm questionnaire. So, for instance, in a village where only 20 people are surveyed with the longer questionnaire (that might take more than an hour to complete), another 80 people are only asked a limited number of social norms question (15 minutes per person).

Second, we might try to create an innovative "observability variable". Sampling strategies developed by Weller[7] (as part of work on "Cultural Consensus Theory") suggest that when a cultural feature is well known and shared, there is no need to

7. Weller, S. C. (2007). Cultural Consensus Theory: Applications and Frequently Asked Questions. *Field Methods*, 19(4), 339-368. doi:10.1177/1525822x07303502

sample a great number of people, provided that there is homogeneity of responses within the small sample. So, for instance, to know whether English people living in the village of Stilton generally shake hands when they meet for the first time, one wouldn't need to survey a representative number of inhabitants in Stilton. If a limited number of people, say 20, all agree individually that shaking hands is what people in their village normally do, it can be fairly safely assumed that shaking hands when people first meet is a cultural feature of those who live in Stilton. Obviously, that would depend on how observable (or detectable) a cultural feature is. A variable could be developed that would allow practitioners to assess the presence of certain social norms, provided that the reliability of their conclusion is conditional upon a given observability.

# NEXT STEPS

Other learning initiatives have begun to explore the use of social norms to address particular health challenges, including the Passages Project led by the Reproductive Health Institute of Georgetown University; the Learning Collaborative on Social Norms, convened by the same group; work on adolescents and social norms led by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Learning Initiative on Norms, Exploitation and Abuse (LINEA) led by LSHTM.

We are coordinating our strategy and actions with them to avoid duplication of effort and increase our collective effectiveness. Our group will focus on studying **social norms that sustain gender inequities, with an emphasis on gender-based violence**, looking in particular at: 1) promising programmatic examples of social norms change; 2) best practices to collect, analyse and use social norms data; and 3) the interplay of social norms and other factors as they contribute to sustaining violent practices and behaviours.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

The group's future learning objectives arose from both members' reflections on the work that group members have done thus far and their vision of what is missing in the field of social norms and violence against women and girls (VAWG). Building on the work that group members have done so far, this group will:

- Develop a coherent, integrated framework of the various factors contributing to sustaining violence, which practitioners can use in the field;
- Test various one- or two-question strategies to measure social norms in the field and then compare their effectiveness;
- Explore further the potential of vignettes to diagnose as well as measure norms;
- Understand the potential of Item Response Theory (psychometric measures) as a tool for practitioners;
- Develop a tool to collect data that are representative of reference groups within larger samples; and
- Explore if and how social network analysis can be simplified as a tool to understand reference groups (as we look at whether it is worth investigating reference groups at all, or whether spatial proximity is a good enough proxy).

In addition to the six goals above, the group will move beyond participants' current projects to explore novel means of advancing social norms and VAWG by:

- Working to identify those elements of social norms theory that would most benefit prevention work on the ground;
- Exploring how power dynamics, gender roles, and social norms intersect;
- Synthesising evidence to help practitioners decide whether and in what form they should integrate a social norms perspective into their work to reduce prevalence of GBV and other harmful practices.

## WHERE NEXT

In 2016 and 2017, LSHTM will host two annual working meetings with relatively small numbers of people to ensure that the collaborative achieves these outcomes. We also plan to diversify participation in the working meetings to ensure the presence of those whose knowledge and experience can best contribute to the learning objectives of each meeting. Finally, the group anticipates that a few members will carry out a few implementation and research projects as part of our collective effort to understand the role that social norm approaches can play in reducing the prevalence of GBV.

# ANNEXES

## ANNEX 1: QUESTIONS USED BY GROUP MEMBERS TO COLLECT DATA ON SOCIAL NORMS

| Descriptive norms/empirical expectations | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Type** | **Institution** | **Questions** |
| Survey question | JHU (Nancy Glass and Nancy Perrin) | Now we would like to know what people in your community actually do. I will be reading you statements, please tell me if:<br>■ None<br>■ Some<br>■ Many<br>■ Most of the people<br>in your community do these things |
| | Voices for Change (ITAD – Claire Hughes) (UCSD – Elaine Denny) | In other families around here, how often does a man hit or slap a woman in a month? (First order: what I think others do)<br>How much would [people who matter to the respondent] think that a man in your family hits or slaps a woman? (Second order: what I think others think I do) |
| | Georgetown – Passages Initiatives (Kim Ashburn) | Married (living together) couples in this congregation discuss together as a couple the decision to use family planning<br>Married (living together) couples in this congregation decides together as a couple which method of family planning to use<br>Married (living together) couples in this congregation, the wife is responsible for family planning<br>Married (living together) couples in this congregation do not use modern methods of family planning<br>(Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) |
| | CARE (Leigh Stefanik) | Please tell me how much the following activities are prevalent in your neighbourhood. Do you think such practices/activities and incidents are very prevalent, can be seen sometimes or rarely?<br>■ Husbands scolding their wives.<br>■ Husbands beating their wives.<br>■ Wife keeping silent so as to not prolong a domestic fight<br>■ Neighbours intervening to advise the wife to keep silent to not to prolong fight<br>(Very Prevalent; Sometime observable; Rarely observable; Do not know) |
| | UCSD (Holly Shakya) | Would you say that men in this community hit their wives/partners?<br>■ Never<br>■ Rarely<br>■ Sometimes<br>■ Always |

| Descriptive norms/empirical expectations | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Type** | **Institution** | **Questions** |
| Survey question | Tostan (Nabou Diouf) | How many people in your community today practice FGC?<br>■ Almost everyone<br>■ More than Half<br>■ Less than half<br>■ A few<br>■ Nobody |
| Qualitative | Tostan (Nabou Diouf) | Speaking of marriage, people in other villages told us that in marriage, female genital cutting is a prerequisite and that they practiced cutting because they do not want their daughters to be unable to get married. In other villages, we were given other reasons. For example, a girl who is cut is considered pure. In other villages, we were told that cutting is unheard of.<br><br>In your opinion, do most people practice circumcision in this village? How do you know so? Why do you think they do/do not do it? |
| | CARE (Leigh Stefanik) | I will tell you a story of a girl I will call Rehima (that is not her actual name) living in this *woreda*. I would like you to listen to the story carefully and discuss the questions that follow. Rehima is a 16-year-old student who lives with her parents. She attends school and helps her mother with household chores. One day Hindiya, Rehima's cousin comes over to visit Rehima's family. They are about the same age. Hindiya announces that she is engaged and getting married in a month's time. She also strongly suggests to Rehima that she should also marry soon as she is getting old for marriage. Hindiya reveals that she also knows someone from their village who is interested in marrying Rehima.<br><br>1. What would most adolescent girls in Rehima's position do in this situation? |

| | Injunctive norms/Normative expectations | |
|---|---|---|
| Type | Institution | Questions |
| Survey question | JHU (Nancy Glass and Nancy Perrin) | I will be reading you a statement and asking you to think about the people whose opinion matters most to you when responding to the statement. For example, how many of the people who are important to you expect women but not men to wash dishes?<br><br>■ Do none of these people expect women but not men to wash dishes<br>■ Do a few of them think that women but not men should wash dishes<br>■ About half of them<br>■ Most of them or<br>■ Do all of them expect women but not men to wash dishes<br><br>It is important to remember that we are not asking what you do or what others do, but what you think the people who are important to you expect other people to do. |
| | Voices for Change (ITAD – Claire Hughes) (UCSD – Elaine Denny) | How much would [people who matter to the respondent] approve or disapprove if a man in your family hit or slapped a woman?<br><br>In your opinion, how many people around here approve of women being selected for the leadership of a local organization (CDA, school, professional/trade association, etc.)? [very few or none/less than half/about half/more than half/almost everyone] |
| | CARE (Leigh Stefanik) | I am going read out some attitudes prevalent in our society towards men and women. Could you please tell me, to what extent such attitudes exist among the people in your neighbourhood?<br><br>■ A man who is not tough enough does not command respect at home.<br>■ A man who beats his wife has no place in his neighbourhood.<br>■ During an argument, a man who listens to his wife's point of view, is considered as being 'not manly enough' by his neighbours and relatives.<br>■ A woman who talks back at her husband earns a bad reputation among relatives.<br><br>(Great extent; To some extent; Does not exist; Do not know) |
| Qualitative | UCSD (Holly Shakya) | If a father in your community does not help care for his sick children, will people in the community think it is good bad or neither?<br><br>■ Good<br>■ Bad<br>■ Neither |
| | Tostan (Nabou Diouf) | What would be the reaction of your family members if they knew you were going to:<br>■ Baptise your child<br>■ Leave to work in the city<br>■ Spank your child to discipline<br>■ Give your 14-year-old daughter away in marriage<br>■ Throw garbage in a public space<br>■ Eat meat every day<br>■ Go abroad for work<br>■ Have your daughter cut<br>■ Buy a car<br>■ Get married<br>■ Visit family members every two months<br>■ Build your house on the outskirt of the village<br><br>Positive opinions or reaction; negative opinions; negative reaction (try to stop me); indifference |

| Injunctive norms/Normative expectations | | |
|---|---|---|
| Type | Institution | Questions |
| Qualitative | Georgetown – Passages Initiatives (Kim Ashburn) | Most members of this church congregation think it is appropriate for married (living together) couples to use a modern method of family planning |
| | | Faith leaders in this church congregation think it is appropriate for married (living together) couples using a modern method of family planning |
| | | My spouse thinks it is appropriate for married (living together) couples to use a modern method of family planning |
| | | (Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) |
| | | If I use a modern method of family planning it will make my home more peaceful |
| | | If I use a modern method of family planning others will respect me more |
| | | If I use a modern method of family planning and members of my church congregation find out, they will think that I am promiscuous |
| | | (Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree) |
| | Tostan (Nabou Diouf) | Now we would like to give you a scenario. Imagine Penda is a woman who lives in this village. She is not a real person who lives here; this is just an example. Do not think of a Penda who lives here. Our Penda could be called Fatou, Mariema, etc. but for us today, she will be called Penda. |
| | | Imagine that Penda, as we have said, a woman from the village, has a six-year-old daughter. Penda would like to have her cut. In your opinion, what would be the reaction of the other members of the community to this news? What will they say and do? Why? |
| | CARE (Leigh Stefanik) | I will tell you a story of a girl I will call Rehima (that is not her actual name) living in this *woreda*. I would like you to listen to the story carefully and discuss the questions that follow. Rehima is a 16 year old student who lives with her parents. She attends school and helps her mother with household chores. One day Hindiya, Rehima's cousin comes over to visit Rehima's family. They are about the same age. Hindiya announces that she is engaged and getting married in a month's time. She also strongly suggests to Rehima that she should also marry soon as she is getting old for marriage. Hindiya reveals that she also knows someone from their village who is interested in marrying Rehima. |
| | | 1. What would Hindiya and most other girls expect Rehima to do in this situation? |
| | | But Rehima doesn't want to marry young. She announces that she does not want marry at this age. |
| | | 2. What would Hindiya and most other girls say about Rehima's decision? |
| | | 3. Would the opinions and reactions of her peers make Rehima change her mind about refusing the marriage? |
| | | 4. Are there any circumstances where it would be considered more or less acceptable for Rehima not to get married at her age? |

| Identification of reference groups | | |
|---|---|---|
| Type | Institution | Questions |
| Survey questions | JHU (Robert Blum and team) | P is confused and does not know what to do. He wants to speak with someone about his feelings and ask for advice. Who do you think he is most likely to turn to for advice?<br>■ A friend<br>■ His sister<br>■ His father<br>■ His mother<br>■ His brother<br>■ No one. He keeps it to himself |

| Other related questions | | |
|---|---|---|
| Type | Institution | Questions |
| Survey questions | Georgetown – Passages Initiatives (Kim Ashburn) | It is important for me to do what my spouse wants me to do<br>It is important for me to do what most people in this church congregation want me to do<br>It is important for me to do what my faith leaders want me to do<br>(Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree)<br>If you wanted to use a modern method of family planning, how confident would you say you are to the following statements, would you say very confident, confident or not at all confident?<br>■ I can use a modern method of family planning correctly to avoid or delay a pregnancy<br>■ I can use a modern method of family planning correctly all the time to delay or avoid pregnancy.<br>■ I can use a modern method of family planning correctly all the time to delay or avoid pregnancy, even if my husband (partner) disagrees.<br>(Very Confident, Confident, Not at all confident) |
| | JHU (Robert Blum and team) | Girl's freedom versus lack of independence<br>■ It's less important for girls to be independent than boys<br>■ Girls should not be allowed to go out with their friends without adult supervision<br>■ Girls should be able to live on their own before they marry<br>■ Girls are more limited than boys in what they can do<br>■ Around here, girls expect the same opportunities as boys<br>■ Girls should trust their families to make the best decisions about their education<br>■ Girls should challenge their parents' decision to stop supporting their education<br>■ Girls should be able to move about as freely as boys<br>(Agree a lot, a little, disagree a little, and disagree a lot). |

| Identification of reference groups | | |
|---|---|---|
| Type | Institution | Questions |
| Survey questions | JHU (Robert Blum and team) | ■ Boys are better leaders as compared to girls<br>■ Boys are expected to protect their family<br>■ Boys are the ones who should bring the money home to provide for their families<br>■ As they grow older boys should focus on their careers rather than spend time at home with their families<br>■ Brothers should be responsible for protecting their sisters<br>■ Boys are better leaders as compared to girls<br>■ Boys are expected to protect their family<br>■ Boys are the ones who should bring the money home to provide for their families<br>(Agree a lot, a little, disagree a little, and disagree a lot) |
| | Tostan (Nabou Diouf) | Over the past 12 months, did you personally have your daughter cut:<br>[Yes, No, Don't know]<br>What would be your attitude towards a family member who was going to have his or her daughter cut?<br>[Intervene to convince me to change their mind, Negative though, indifference, positive thoughts or actions]<br>If you had the opportunity to decide, would you stop or continue the practice of female genital cutting in your family?<br>[Stop, Continue]<br>If everyone abandoned FGC, would you continue or stop the practices?<br>[Stop Continue] |

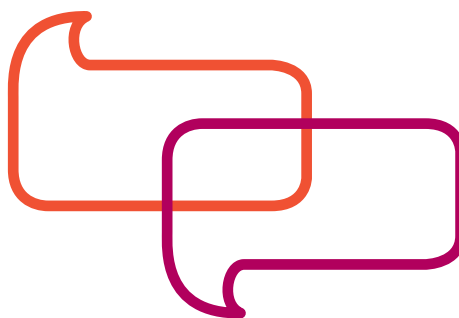| Name | Institution | Relevant social norm project |
|------|-------------|------------------------------|
| Kimberly Ashburn | Georgetown University | **Tékponon Jikuagou** aims to develop and test a scalable package of social network activities to engage men and women in discussion and reflection about the unmet need for family planning. The package of activities works with and through influential and connected network actors who may be more effective in diffusing new ideas and mobilising public dialogue than formal leaders or health workers alone. The intervention aims to increase acceptability of discussions concerning family size and family planning use. It also aims to create an enabling environment for family planning use by increasing the perception that social network members approve of family planning use. |
| Tara Beattie | LSHTM | **Project Samata** is a comprehensive, multi-level intervention designed to address school drop-out, child marriage and child entry into sex work among low caste adolescent girls living in rural northern Karnataka, south India. The intervention seeks to reach low caste girls and their families; adolescent boys; village communities; high school teachers and school governing committees; and local government officials. The Samata study is a cluster randomised controlled trial that is being conducted in eighty village clusters (40 intervention; 40 control) in northern Karnataka to evaluate the intervention. As part of the evaluation process, we have asked a series of questions of girls, families and school teachers, designed to assess the attitudes, normative beliefs, normative expectations and perceived consequences of departing from the norm, and how these have changed over time and between study arms (control vs. intervention). Topics covered under these 'norms' sections include: girls education, child marriage, 'eve' teasing, obedience/violence in the home and freedom of girls to roam within the village. 'Norms' statements comprise a 3-point Likert scale: agree, somewhat agree, do not agree. |
| Robert Blum and Linnea Zimmerman | JHU | The goal of the **Global Early Adolescent Study** is to understand the factors in early adolescence that predispose young people to subsequent sexual health risks and conversely that promote healthy sexuality, so as to provide the information needed to promote sexual and reproductive wellbeing. The Global Early Adolescent Study will be conducted in two phases. PHASE I will take 2 years to complete through the summer 2016 and uses a mixed-method approach to develop and test 4 instruments assessing gender norms and sexuality for use among early adolescents. It will explore the ways gender norms are related to different domains of sexuality and health in this age group. PHASE II will take 5 years to complete and will use the validated instruments produced in Phase 1 to pursue several research objectives. |

| Name | Institution | Relevant social norm project |
|------|-------------|------------------------------|
| Nabou Diouf | Tostan | Tostan's mission is to empower African communities to bring about sustainable development and positive social transformation based on respect for human rights through its **Community Empowerment Program** (CEP), which is the foundation of Tostan's work. In this meeting, we focus on a Mali case study from the midterm evaluation of the Generational Change in Three Years (CG3) project, which Tostan is implementing in Mali, Mauritania, Guinea and Guinea Bissau. MERL used a mixed methods approach for the evaluation, which included individual questionnaires, and qualitative in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. In total, 508 informants in eight communities in the Koulikoro region of Mali responded to the individual questionnaire. Additionally, in the same region, 32 individuals participated in the qualitative interviews and Tostan supervisors held 16 focus group discussions, eight of which consisted of men only, and eight of which consisted of women only. |
| Claire Hughes<br><br>Elaine Denny | ITAD<br><br>UCSD | **Voices for Change** (V4C) is a 4-year DFID-supported programme in Nigeria which seeks to strengthen the enabling environment for girls and women by tackling structural causes of gender inequality and exclusion. It does so through multiple interventions at 3 inter-connected levels: individual level, society level and formal institutions. At each of these levels, it seeks to change social norms relating to violence against girls and women, women's leadership and women's participation in household decision-making. The programme is implemented in 4 states: Enugu and Lagos in the south, and Kaduna and Kano in the north. It also provides some support at the federal level.<br><br>V4C is using an Attitudes, Practices and Social Norms survey as part of its results framework to measure programme outcomes and to inform programme strategy and implementation. This is a multi-year panel survey of a representative sample of 2,397 men and 2,401 women aged 16–25 in V4C's focal states. We use a mixed methods approach, with the main quantitative survey instrument being supplemented by qualitative data gathered from focus group discussions and interviews with key influencers. To date, we have conducted 2 rounds of data collection, the baseline in early 2015 and a second round in late 2015/early 2016. Further rounds are planned in late 2016 and 2017, and possibly in 2018. |
| Giovanna Lauro | Promundo | In Niger, Tanzania and Uganda, Promundo is conducting mixed-method research focusing on norms related to gender equality, especially around parental and adult male control of adolescent girls' sexuality (including harmful traditional practices), VAWG and VAC and contraceptive use. In Niger, in collaboration with USCD, we are conducting a household survey of married adolescents ages 13–19 and their husbands, followed by qualitative research. In Tanzania and Uganda we will conduct an IMAGES survey targeting women and girls and men and boys ages 15–49. Prior to implementation of the survey, qualitative research, including vignettes, will be undertaken. In Brazil, Promundo is starting a research project in collaboration with LSHTM which aims at exploring social norms that support or mitigate sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. To this end, we will conduct qualitative research to map attitudes, social norms and practices around the issue (including the use of markers), and quantitative research to develop a scale and a questionnaire to measure relevant social norms (targeting women and girls, men and boys ages 13–59). |

| Name | Institution | Relevant social norm project |
|---|---|---|
| Nancy Perrin | JHU | Nancy Perrin has developed a measure of Social Norms of Sexual Violence Towards Women and Girls in Somalia and South Sudan. She is currently using this measure to evaluate a UNICEF intervention aimed at changing social norms in these settings. This is a randomized trial with longitudinal data collection that includes social norms, community behaviour and personal beliefs. She is currently working on a model that conceptualises the process of change over integrating social norms, community behaviour and personal beliefs. |
| Holly Shakya | UCSD | This study was conducted in rural Honduras in 176 villages with approximately 24,000 participants. The purpose of the study is to assess social network targeting mechanisms on the uptake of a community-based maternal and child health intervention. To that end, the data collection involves three waves of behavioural, attitudinal, normative and demographic information from all individuals 12 and older within the study population. – baseline (almost complete), interim and post intervention. Baseline data collection also includes comprehensive social network data including familial, support, and social ties. The use of social network data with attitudinal, normative and behavioural data will allow us to measure social clustering of those attitudes and behaviours, with the potential of identifying reference groups. |
| Leigh Stefanik | CARE USA | CARE and its partners have been experimenting with practical application of social norms theory in 4 projects since 2014, and presented in detail on this work in Sri Lanka. Through an iterative learning process, the **Redefining Norms to Empower Women (ReNEW)** project piloted social norms change strategies and measurement tools from 2014–16 to challenge intimate partner violence in seven tea plantations in Sri Lanka. The programme evaluation used mixed-methods including surveys (314 men and women at baseline and endline), individual interviews (endline only) and focus groups discussions with vignettes and direct questions (endline only). Surveys gathered data on attitudes, and empirical and normative expectations, which were coded and entered into Microsoft Access and analysed using SPSS. Qualitative data were manually coded using CARE's analysis framework for vignettes. The presentation also discussed examples from CARE's programming in Ethiopia focused on adolescent empowerment and early marriage. |
| Ben Cislaghi | LSHTM | |
| Lori Heise | LSHTM | |

| Components of a norm | Definition | Signs of changes in a social norm |
|---|---|---|
| Empirical Expectations | What I think others do | - Responses reflect a different perception of what people think others are doing<br>- Increase in respondents report a perceived change of behavior of others<br>- Changes in the extent of conformity and disagreement among homogenous groups, and across the different groups |
| Normative Expectations | What I think others expect me to do (what I should do according to others) | - Responses reflect a different perception of what others expect respondents to do<br>- Increase of respondents reporting the desired new behavior as expected of them<br>- Changes in the extent of conformity and disagreement among homogenous groups, and across different groups<br>- Changes in alignment between empirical and normative expectations |
| Sanctions | <u>Anticipated</u> opinion or reaction of others (to the behavior) – specifically others whose opinions matter to me | - Changes in sanctions that are identified<br>- Changes in the severity of sanction<br>- Changes in the likelihood of sanctions being enacted<br>- Changes in consistency across groups |
| Sensitivity to sanctions | Do sanctions matter for behavior?<br><br>If there is a negative reaction from others (negative sanction), would the main character change their behavior in the future? | - Changes in how the main character would respond to negative sanctions<br>- Increase in respondents who say the main character would still behave in the desired way despite sanctions |
| Exceptions | Under what circumstances would it be okay for the main character to break the norm (by acting positively)? | - Change in the # of exceptions allowed to break a norm<br>- Changes in #s or types of individuals who deviate from the norm<br>- Changes in responses about individuals who are impervious to social sanctions |

# LSHTM GROUP ON SOCIAL NORMS AND GBV

## Strategies to diagnose and measure social norms related to gender-based violence: Key lessons from the Baltimore working meeting

### The LSHTM group on norms and GBV

The Gender, Violence, and Health Centre (GVHC) at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) has launched a learning and reflection group on social norms and gender-based violence (GBV). There is increasing interest among donors and practitioners to harness insights from social norms theory to catalyse change around gender inequity and harmful gender-related practices. Little guidance is available, however, to help practitioners integrate simple norms measures and change strategies within field-based programming. Early efforts to address this need included a meetings convened by the STRIVE research consortium (January 2013) and the LINEA (March 2015). These gatherings confirmed that theory-based insights can open promising avenues for achieving change. To address the gap between theory and its application within development practice, the LSHTM group takes as its mission:

**To translate and adapt insights and methods from social norm theory and research into practical guidance for development practitioners seeking to transform harmful gender-related practices in low and middle-income countries.**

### The Baltimore meeting

As part of the learning initiative, LSHTM convened an expert group meeting in July 2016 on the measurement of the social norms sustaining GBV. The meeting focused on identifying best-practice strategies to diagnose and measure social norms. Participants were drawn from groups that had already attempted to capture gender-related norms and practices in the field. The meeting was kept relatively small to ensure a productive exchange among the few teams that have experimented with different strategies for collecting quantitative data on norms and gender-based violence.

### Common challenges

Before and during the meeting, participants identified some common challenges in their work on social norms.

#### Grounding the social norms approach within a convincing framework of social change

Despite increasing interest in social norms, no integrated framework exists to help practitioners plan for multi-layered interventions.

#### Developing effective questions to collect social norms data

Participants mentioned that they struggled to develop a tool that would ensure the collection of valid social norms data across contexts and for a variety of different norms. They needed good qualitative and quantitative questions that would confidently generate meaningful data.

#### Implementing efficient systems for data collection

One important contribution would be a system to collect reliable data on social norms that could be integrated within NGOs' routine monitoring and evaluation practices. Participants envisioned a relatively small number of norms questions that would not overburden surveys and M&E systems.

#### Identifying meaningful data analysis strategies

Participants wished for a system that could help them diagnose, with a reasonable level of confidence, whether a norm exists or not, within a given reference group. This system would also need to include a strategy to identify correctly the appropriate reference group for each norm.

#### Developing a measure of normative strength

Data suggesting the presence of a norm doesn't necessarily provide evidence on the strength of the influence that a particular norm exerts over people's actions and decisions. A method to evaluate normative strength over people's behaviours (other than prevalence of normative beliefs) would be extremely helpful to researchers and practitioners in the field.

Answers to some of these questions emerged during discussions and debates at the meeting. Others await further exploration by the group in the next few months.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

### An integrated framework for social change

The LSHTM group proposed a framework that embeds social norms within a matrix of other factors that sustain GBV (or any other practice). Using this framework (Figure 1), practitioners can diagnose the factors that maintain a practice/behaviour and design a change strategy address them. The framework looks at the interaction of structural, material, social, and individual factors and helps highlight the intersections among these factors. For instance, even when services (a material factor) are in place, access to services may still be conditioned by norms against women seeking health care or people's knowledge of the services that are available.

### Appropriate strategies and tools for data collection

Different approaches should be used to accommodate the available evidence on the influence of social norms over a given behaviour. The 'funnel' of norms exploration and measurement (Figure 2) is the result of this reflection. Practitioners should position their understanding of social norms on the funnel: the more evidence they possess, the further down the funnel their research can fall.

**Phase 1. Explore potential normative influence**

Practitioners who do not possess any evidence confirming that a given behaviour is under normative influence should start at phase 1 of the funnel. Their explorative research should include very open qualitative questions. Some were included in the work presented by Johns Hopkins University (JHU):
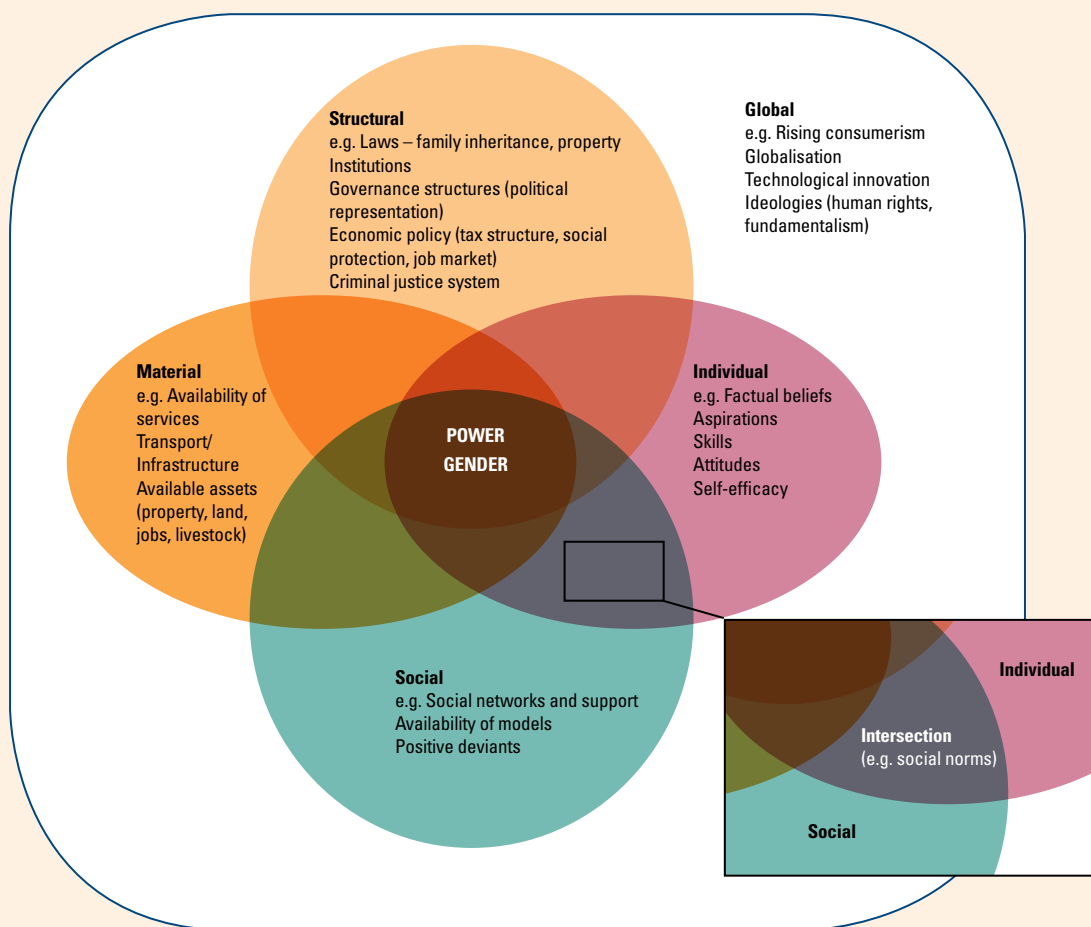
"What would be the advantages or disadvantages of doing X? What would happen if you didn't do X? What would happen if you did Y?"

The goal of this phase is to uncover the fabric of norms sustaining a behaviour (family privacy sustaining violence, for instance).

**Phase 2. Investigate dynamics of normative influence in a given context**

Practitioners who have some evidence or insights suggesting that a behaviour X is likely to be under normative influence (from literature review, observations, population data, for example) would start here. Their investigation would include vignettes and qualitative questions aiming to explore whether X is under the influence of the norms hypothesized by practitioners, and the dynamics of those norms (what sanctions, what reference groups, what strength, for instance). CARE USA produced a tool (the SNAP) that can help practitioners design vignettes, drawing upon the different characteristics of a social norm. The goal of this phase is to develop an understanding of how a specific set of norms encourages compliance with a specific practice.

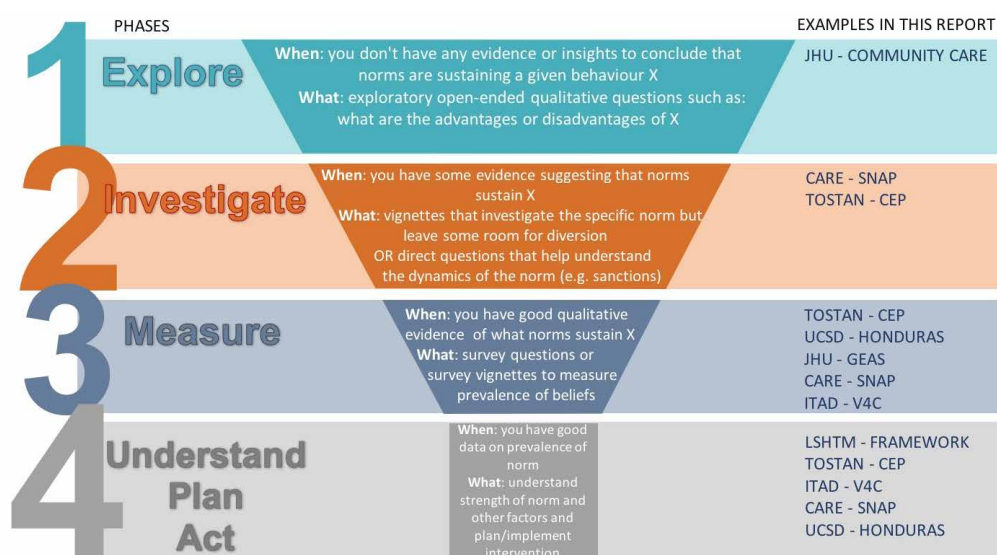Figure 1: Elements that can maintain behaviours

Figure 2: The 'funnel' of norms exploration and measurement

| PHASES | | EXAMPLES IN THIS REPORT |
|---|---|---|
| **1 Explore** | **When:** you don't have any evidence or insights to conclude that norms are sustaining a given behaviour X<br>**What:** exploratory open-ended qualitative questions such as: what are the advantages or disadvantages of X | JHU - COMMUNITY CARE |
| **2 Investigate** | **When:** you have some evidence suggesting that norms sustain X<br>**What:** vignettes that investigate the specific norm but leave some room for diversion OR direct questions that help understand the dynamics of the norm (e.g. sanctions) | CARE - SNAP<br>TOSTAN - CEP |
| **3 Measure** | **When:** you have good qualitative evidence of what norms sustain X<br>**What:** survey questions or survey vignettes to measure prevalence of beliefs | TOSTAN - CEP<br>UCSD - HONDURAS<br>JHU - GEAS<br>CARE - SNAP<br>ITAD - V4C |
| **4 Understand Plan Act** | **When:** you have good data on prevalence of norm<br>**What:** understand strength of norm and other factors and plan/implement intervention | LSHTM - FRAMEWORK<br>TOSTAN - CEP<br>ITAD - V4C<br>CARE - SNAP<br>UCSD - HONDURAS |

## Phase 3. Measure social norms

Practitioners who possess good evidence of what norms sustain a harmful practice or behaviour, could start at phase 3. Undertaking quantitative measurement without having this evidence would be like measuring the presence of a virus without knowing whether that virus causes the particular illness: the data would provide few insights into the prevalence of norms sustaining X, and wouldn't be of much use for designing an intervention. Knowing what norms influence X and how, practitioners can develop meaningful survey questions that would help measure the prevalence of the norm. Participants reviewed existing measurement frameworks (including those that require investigators to ask questions around first and second order beliefs)[1]. However, there are simple ways of measuring norms that do not require asking a long list of questions. An example during the meeting, for example, measured empirical expectations by asking: "Do men in this community hit their wives/partners? 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Always" (UCSD); and for normative expectations: "What would the reaction of your neighbours be if they knew you were going to X? positive, negative, indifferent" (Tostan).

## Phase 4. Analyse social norms data and plan an intervention

Discussing strategies for data analysis, participants agreed that prevalence of normative beliefs is not an indication of the power of those beliefs over people's behaviour. Quantitative analysis should look, at the very least, for correlations between those beliefs and the actual behaviour. One of the major insights that emerged from the discussion is the need to disaggregate data at the reference group level (that is, at the smaller geographical cluster). Disaggregation of data showed important differences in the normative beliefs held by different reference groups that would change both the interpretation of the data and how practitioners would use the data to design an intervention (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Difference in data aggregation for social norms
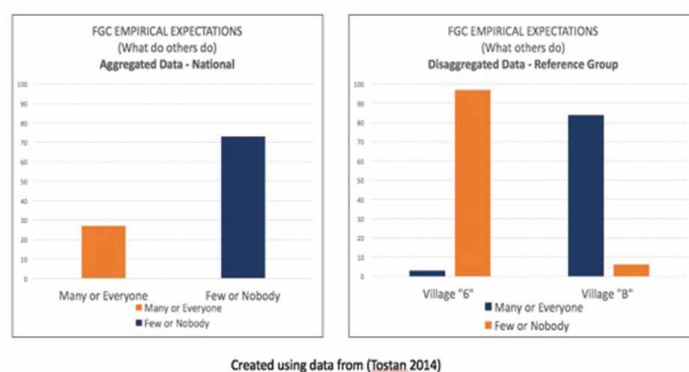


Created using data from (Tostan 2014)

1. What one does (the outcome behaviour/practice); 2. what one thinks they should do; 3. what one thinks others do; 4. what one thinks others should do; 5. what one thinks others think they do; 6. what one thinks others think they should do.

## ABOUT STRIVE

A multi-year research consortium, STRIVE is led from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine with partners in India, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and the United States. Leading researchers in many disciplines – from biomedical trials to social science, epidemiology to anthropology, mathematical modelling to economics – head cross-partner working groups on crucial structural drivers of HIV risk:



Broadly, STRIVE:

- assesses how structural factors including stigma and violence impact on the treatment and prevention cascades

- designs, pilots, evaluates and analyses "upstream" structural interventions that yield multiple development benefits

- refines a new co-financing model and works with UNDP and African governments to test this approach in practice

- studies structural factors affecting young people's HIV vulnerability, including alcohol, and tests combination interventions for adolescent girls in India, South Africa and Tanzania