

Applying social norms theory for measurement

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CARE's Journey: from theory to practice



Focused on three main learning sites:



Sri Lanka

IPV prevention focusing on male engagement and media campaigns



Ethiopia

adolescent empowerment and early marriage mitigation



Ethiopia (BMGF)

girls' empowerment, early marriage prevention, improvement of health and nutrition outcomes



Grounded in gender transformative programming

THE WAY WE USUALLY PROGRAM to change behavior...

target individual **attitudes, skills, and knowledge...**

usually through awareness raising, information campaigns, peer to peer education.

SOCIAL NORMS THEORY SUGGESTS...

Individuals' behaviors may be more **influenced by what individuals think others do and think.**

What is a social norm?

Unspoken rules of behavior within a group about what is considered acceptable:

Consists of 2 types of social expectations:

- What I think others are doing, AND
- What I believe others think I SHOULD do

In other words, people's behavior depends on their expectations about **other people's behavior** and **approval**

Social norms theory: terminology and definitions



Terminology	Definition
Attitude	What I think
Behavior	What I do
Empirical expectation	What I think others do
Normative expectation	What I believe others think I should do

Social norms

Reference groups: the people whose opinions matter to us
(who would influence our behavior)

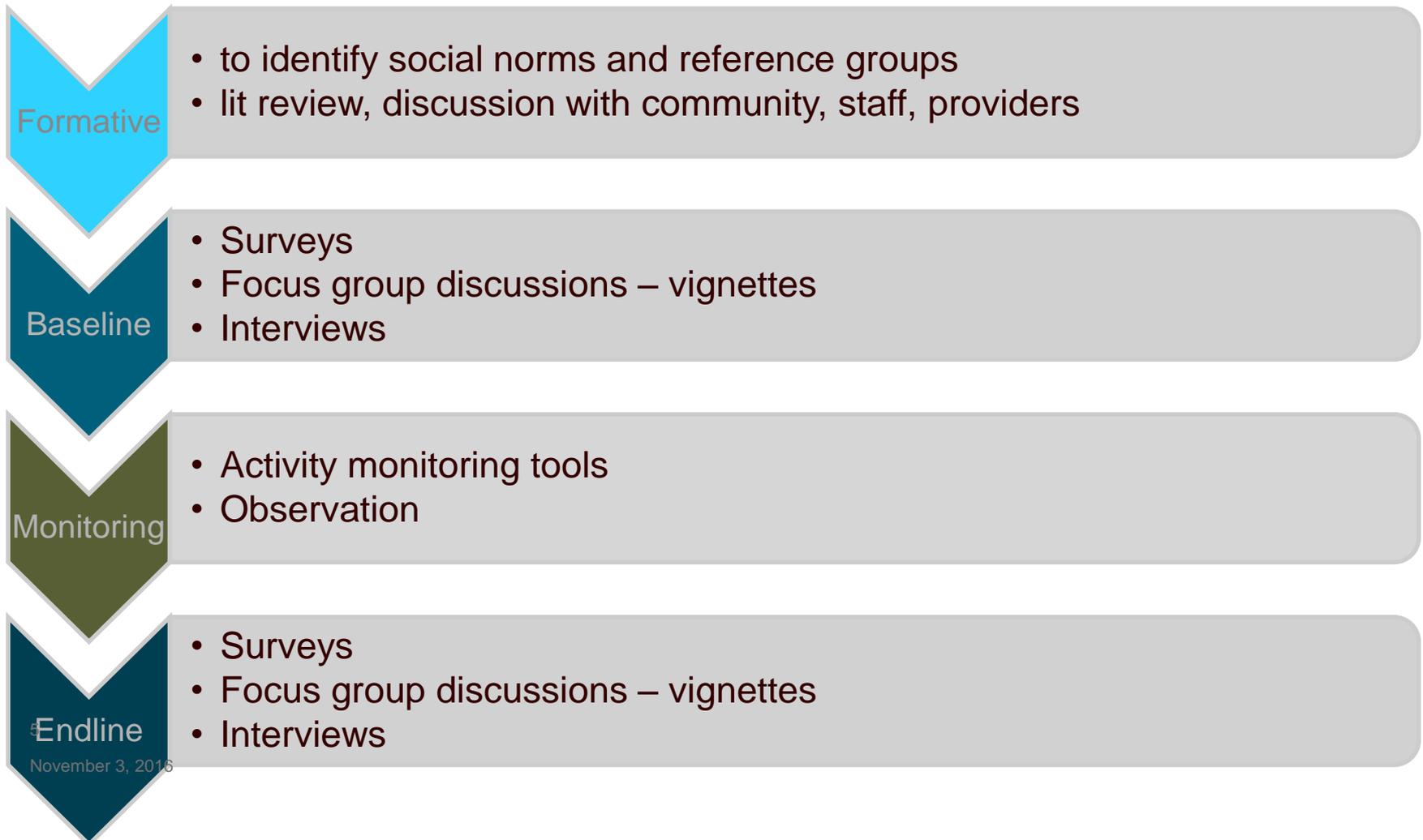
Sanctions: reactions (positive or negative)

Adapted from UPenn SOnG

Measurement methods



From diagnosing whether a norm exists,
to understanding if and how norms change



Formative research guiding questions



What and whose behavior do we want to see change?

Who are their reference groups for that behavior?

What, if any, social norms are keeping their behavior in place?

What are the social sanctions preventing those individuals from changing their behavior?

Sample analysis of formative research data, from Abdiboru project in Ethiopia



Theme	Social norm	Whose behavior do we want to see change	Reference groups	Social sanctions
Girls' Marriage	Girls are expected to marry before the age of 17 year	1. Adolescents girls	1. Close friends & siblings 2. Intermediaries (peers, siblings & relatives)	1. Considered by others as unattractive and unlovable 2. Considered as bad luck to family; humiliation to themselves and their family
		1. Parents	1. Other Parents	1. Shamed to tolerate a burden to the family 2. Considered as unlucky parents

Illustrative example

In most surveys	Adding norms questions
Behavior: Are you or have you ever been married? At what age did you first get married?	What I think others do (EE): Do most girls in your community marry before age 17?
Attitude: Do you think girls should get married before age 17?	What I believe others think I should do (NE): Do most of your friends think that girls should get married before age 17?

Sample survey questions – Abdiboru project



Now, I would like to ask you what you think others do in regards to adolescent girls' marriage. Please answer the following questions as it relates to your community context.

Agree a lot	Agree a little	Disagree a little	Disagree a lot	Don't know	Refuse
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1. Most adolescent girls marry before the age of 17.
2. Most people in the community expect adolescent girls to get married before the age of 17 years
3. Marrying early avoids social stigma

- Vignettes tell short stories about imaginary characters in specific scenarios
- Used in focus group discussion settings – a common methodology in development work
- Vignettes measure the weakening or shifting of social norms and their impact on behaviors
- Vignettes do not capture actual behavior

CARE's Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP): Analysis framework and tool to design vignettes



Empirical Expectations	What I think others do
Normative Expectations	What I think others expect me to do (what I should do according to others)
Sanctions	Opinion or reaction of others (to the behavior) – specifically others whose opinions matter to me
Sensitivity to sanctions	If there is a negative reaction (Q3) from others, would the main character change their behavior in the future?
Exceptions	Under what circumstances would it be ok for the main character to break the norm (by acting positively)?

Example vignette - Abdiboru project, Ethiopia



I will tell you a story of a girl I will call Rehima. [...] 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.

Example vignette - Abdiboru project, Ethiopia



1. *What would most adolescent girls in Rehima's position do in this situation?*
2. *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.

3. *What would Hindiya and most other girls say about Rehima's decision?*
4. *Would the opinions and reactions of her peers make Rehima change her mind about refusing the marriage?*
5. *Are there any circumstances where it would be considered more or less acceptable for Rehima not to get married at her age?*

CARE's Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP) (excerpt)



Empirical Expectations	What I think others do	<i>"Once you have got the chance, you have to marry. Your friends are getting married."</i>
Normative Expectations	What I think others expect me to do (what I should do according to others)	<i>"...everybody in the community expects adolescent girls...at the age of 13 to 15 years... to get married"</i>
Sanctions	Opinion or reaction of others (to the behavior) – specifically others whose opinions matter to me	<i>"If a girl is not married at age of 15 years, many adolescent girls in the community would insult her saying 'haftu', which mean the one who is not needed, or unattractive"</i>
Sensitivity to sanctions	If there is a negative reaction (Q3) from others, would the main character change their behavior in the future?	<i>Most girls would change their minds and marry after prolonged insults and isolation.</i>
Exceptions	Under what circumstances would it be ok for the main character to break the norm (by acting positively)?	<i>Girls can refuse marriage if they excel at school and their teachers convince their family to let them continue school.</i>

SNAP – example analysis questions

- Are there any signs that disagreement is increasing about EE and/or NE among certain groups, and if so why?
- Are social sanctions lessening or weakening over time? Are there any changes in the type, severity, or certitude, or influence of social sanctions?
- Are (more) alternative, non-normative behaviors perceived to be possible?
- Are there any increases in exceptions when it is okay to deviate from the norm? Are there increases in the perceived amount of people who deviate from the norm?

Challenges & Opportunities

- Using social norms approach to identify possible cracks in norms to exploit – there are opportunities we may have been missing
- Peer/social pressure is key, especially anticipation of negative social sanctions
- Social norms as only one potential factor influencing behavior – not a silver bullet
- Time and capacity demands for measurement



THANK YOU

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