



CARE® TIPPING POINT

Phase 1 | Method Briefs



SOCIAL NORMS MEASUREMENT

CARE's Tipping Point initiative focuses on addressing the root causes of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM), by promoting the rights of adolescent girls through community level programming and evidence generation in Nepal and Bangladesh, and multi-level advocacy and cross-learning efforts across the globe. One of the project's foundational approaches is social norms' integration to facilitate individual-, household-, and community-level changes. This methods brief offers a critical review of the different methods and tools used to evaluate social norms change and the lessons learned in using these methods during the Phase 1 evaluation.

Phase 1 (2013-2017) of this three-phase project used participatory feminist and developmental evaluation approaches as the basis of the [monitoring, evaluation and learning framework](#). While the Phase 1 evaluation incorporated multiple approaches to measure social norms change, CARE's Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP)² framework formed the basis upon which social norms shifts were measured and understood and thus informed the development of core evaluation tools and their analysis, namely focus group discussions (FGDs), Photovoice, and SenseMaker®.³

Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP) Framework

CARE's [Social Norms Analysis Plot \(SNAP\)](#) framework provides practical guidelines to understand and evaluate norms change (Figure 1). The framework defines components of social norms upon which tools are built, allowing the evaluator to assess the strength of a particular norm and ways it may have shifted over time. The first three components of the SNAP framework are drawn directly from social norms theory⁴ and describe the nature of the norm in a given context: Empirical Expectations (what I think others do), Normative Expectation (what I think others expect me to do), and Sanctions (anticipated opinion or reactions from others). The other two components of the SNAP framework further characterize the strength of the norm in question in its current state: Sensitivity to Sanctions (how social sanctions influence behavior) and Exceptions (under what circumstances it is considered acceptable to deviate from the norm). The SNAP framework helped guide Tipping Point's understanding of the nature of norms related to gender equity and child marriage, and how they were shifting, weakening, or remaining fixed.

FIGURE 1.

CARE SOCIAL NORMS ANALYSIS PLOT (SNAP) FRAMEWORK

Snap was developed to measure the nature of specific social norms and their influence, and offers a useful framework to examine the initial reactions to a social norms focused activity. Specifically, it examines any preliminary effects on:

EMPIRICAL EXPECTATIONS

What I think others do.

NORMATIVE EXPECTATIONS

What I think others expect me to do.

EXCEPTIONS

Under what situations is it acceptable to break the norms.

SANCTIONS

Anticipated reactions of others whose opinions matter to me.

SENSITIVITY TO SANCTIONS

How much sanctions matter for me.

SNAP in Action: Tipping Point's Methods and Tools

Tipping Point's [methods](#) to measure social norms in the Phase 1 qualitative evaluation included focus group discussions (FGDs), Photovoice, and SenseMaker®.

Focus Group Discussions

SNAP traditionally uses vignettes, or short stories featuring norms in a particular context, and follow up questions for participants to discuss the story. By telling a short story and then guiding participations through a series of related questions about the norm and how they think others would react, this method helped Tipping Point understand participants' perceptions and expectations of their peers and other community members. To make the vignette method more accessible to program teams, Tipping Point program staff in Bangladesh and Nepal developed a simpler version of the vignette tool, called a Norm by Norm FGD guide. For this tool, a facilitator goes through a series of questions for each norm prioritized within the project to explore perceptions, sanctions, sensitivity to sanctions, and exceptions to that particular norm. The Norm by Norm FGD guide was more useful than vignettes in Tipping Point's programmatic context due to a limited timeframe for FGDs and frustrations from respondents when probed about the difference between normative and empirical expectations.

In Nepal specifically, exploring one norm at a time made it possible for researchers much richer data on sanctions and exceptions.

In Bangladesh, Tipping Point designed a FGD to discuss the social expectations for girls with mothers, fathers, boys, and girls themselves. The tool asked participants to describe traits of "good girls" and "bad girls" within different contexts. Because the project had gathered [SenseMaker®](#) data already at the time of the FGD data collection, researchers decided to explore social norms change in a different way. Therefore, the prompt for parents was framed less in terms of "What is expected of girls?" but more in terms of "What is a good example for a girl?".

Tipping Point researchers conducted FGDs in the same communities where the formative research for the project occurred three years earlier (August 2014). Although formative research tools did not use the SNAP framework, the team was able to compare the data in some important ways. The analysis gave indications of the degree to which different social norms affecting girls had changed and revealed sanctions for violating norms and under what conditions there are exceptions to the norm.

Photovoice

Photovoice is a participatory process by which participants share their lives through an open-ended photography task and discussion to document change. In Bangladesh and Nepal, an open-ended prompt enabled participants to spontaneously document changes that they considered important in all aspects of their lives and their communities, including references to social norm change. The photographs mostly showed behavioral changes either in the participants or the people photographed: some participants shared photos with girls playing football and riding bicycles, men and boys sharing more responsibility for household work, and supplies used for menstrual hygiene management.

The SNAP framework was instrumental in shaping the questions in both the mid-week and the final group discussions about the photographs taken. By probing into photographs of positive deviants, people's willingness to accept sanctions, and lowering of perceived sanctions; and comparing the responses given by girls and mothers, the team was able to explore whether the program had the same level of impact in both groups. The detailed discussions around social norms provided insights into family relationships dynamics and potential unintended consequences, such as empowering mothers.

For additional information, please read the full Photovoice Methods Brief [here](#).

Overview of the Photovoice Process

STEP 1

Participants are trained on how to take pictures and get consent

STEP 2

Participants are given cameras and an assignment

STEP 3

Participants take photos and are asked to select 20 images, and narrow those to 5 of the most important images

STEP 4

Participants share why the images were important to them with captions documented

STEP 5

Photographs and captions are analyzed for themes and trends related to the evaluation questions

Overview of the SenseMaker® process

STEP 1

A story prompt asks participants to share an experience, moment or event that matters to them.

STEP 2

Storytellers answer the 'signification framework:' dyads, triads, stones, multiple choice, and demographic questions.

STEP 3

Participants answers demographic questions that enable parsing of the data and more nuanced analysis based on group identities.

STEP 4

Researchers ask for participants' consent to share the stories externally.

STEP 5

Data analysis using the SenseMaker® Collector app for revealing, comparing, and contrasting patterns that cannot be detected by reading (or textual analysis) of the stories.

STEP 6

SenseMaker® interpretation workshop (to refine the understanding of the data).

SenseMaker®

SenseMaker® is a narrative-based approach that involves the collection of short stories from targeted participant groups in response to a common prompt. SenseMaker® was only utilized in Bangladesh and was deliberately designed to capture data on a broad range of issues that adolescent girls face - including social norms. The method prioritizes the voice of the participants so that the storytellers themselves make the primary interpretation through a set of pre-determined questions – termed 'signification framework.' The social norms questions within the signification framework were based on the SNAP framework. Thus, the researchers used SenseMaker®, in combination with other sources of data, to see what social norms are prevalent in the community and what sanctions are put in place when girls violate those norms.

The tool included SNAP-based multiple choice questions in order for respondents to label their own story data in relation to social norms: what the story was about (i.e. the theme of the story or which social norm it touched upon, such as a girl's honor, dowry, mobility, and romantic relationships), whether the situation in the story would be considered as socially acceptable or unacceptable by the community (i.e. empirical and normative expectations), and if it was unacceptable whether or not anyone said or did anything about it (i.e. sanctions).

For additional information, please read the full Sensemaker Methods Brief [here](#).



Lessons Learned

Framing social norms for adolescents: asking them to identify a “good example” is helpful – particularly when discussing norms one by one. However, to get deep insights on specific social norms, it is essential for the facilitators to be able to probe about sanctions and willingness to go against norms, as well as exceptions.

Know the basics of how social norms are constructed: Facilitators and tool developers can look to what makes a social norms to not confuse assessing norms with assessing only individual attitudes and behaviors.

Use a tool that works for both communities and researchers: The norm by norm guide used in Nepal is a very structured tool for exploring social norms, which yields clean data but can also be restrictive for formative or exploratory research. Compared to using vignettes, FDGs using the norm by norm approach are less time-consuming (preparing the tool and using the tool) and therefore more cost-effective and agile for capturing data on specific social norms.

Using multiple and interactive methods enhances the depth of analysis: Through Photovoice, the team learned that when participants are provided with participatory and creative methods to document their experiences visually, they can capture social norms change and its impact on their lives. SenseMaker® allowed Tipping Point to generate incredibly rich and nuanced qualitative data about girls’ experiences of gendered social norms, but ought to be combined with other methods to draw conclusions.

Methods should recognize that girls are experts in their own lives: Photovoice demonstrated that social norms change is important to girls. It is important to consider participant agency in capturing data on social norms, as it is possible that previously unnamed norms, sanctions, or even examples of positive deviants could emerge.

Conclusion

The combined analysis of qualitative data from the FDGs, Photovoice and Sensemaker has proven to be an innovative way to measure Tipping Point’s role in shifting social norms in Bangladesh and Nepal. The SNAP framework is central to understanding social norms change by informing not only tool construction but also providing an analytical framework that ties research directly to program design.

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Social norms are rules of behavior based on perceptions of what is considered acceptable or common in a group or society.
- 2 For more information on the SNAP framework, see http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/applying_social_norms_theory_to_practice_cares_journey.pdf
- 3 All methods briefs can be found here: <https://caretippingpoint.org/resources/methods-briefs/>
- 4 Bicchieri, C., Lindemans, J., & Jiang, T. (2014). A structured approach to a diagnostic of collective practices. *Front. Psychol.* 5:1418.