PIECING TOGETHER THE EVIDENCE ON SOCIAL NORMS AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

THE EQUALITY INSTITUTE

seek knowledge. create change

The Equality Institute brings together the world's best minds to make violence against women and girls a thing of the past. We conduct rigorous research to understand what causes violence against women, and pinpoint strategies to stop it from happening. By designing projects, developing creative approaches to share information, and connecting people around the world, we are working with the international community towards social change at every level. The Equality Institute is a women-led and proudly feminist organisation, built upon the principles of feminism, non-violence, inclusivity, knowledge-seeking, and creativity.

ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This booklet provides an overview on the current state of evidence on the drivers and contributing factors of violence against women and girls, focusing in particular on the role of social norms. It provides a summary of effective strategies for the prevention of violence against women and girls and of what works to change harmful, violence-supportive social norms. The evidence presented in this booklet is informed by a strong feminist approach to preventing violence. The key message is that while we already have some evidence, we don't yet have all the answers. By sharing this knowledge, we hope to inspire and facilitate discussion around innovative approaches to preventing violence against women and girls.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WHAT IS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS?

Violence against women and girls is any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or private life.[1]

Violence against women and girls takes many forms globally and is a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Violence against women and girls takes place regardless of age, class, sexuality, race and ethnicity, and is prevalent around the world. On average, one in three women will experience some form of physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, or sexual violence by a non-partner, in her lifetime.[2] Women are most likely to experience violence by a partner or someone else known to them.

Violence against women and girls is a global public health problem, with serious consequences for women's health and well-being, and can have a lasting impact on the development of children. Experiences of violence limit women's choices and their capacity to participate in social life. Violence against women and girls also carries significant economic costs, with both households and national economies paying in terms of lost productivity and the financial burden on health and justice services.
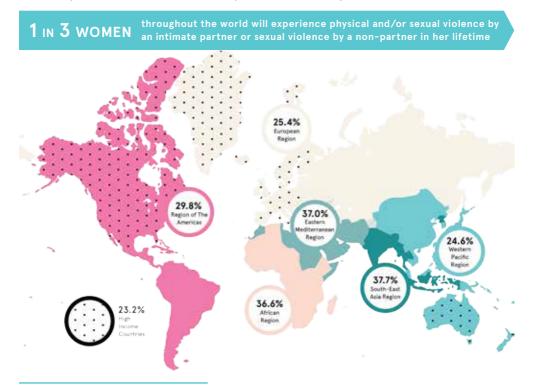
1 IN 3 WOMEN throughout the world will experience physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by a non-partner in her lifetime

25.4%
European Region

29.8%
Region of The Americas

37.0%
Eastern Mediterranean Region

24.6%
Western Pacific Region

37.7%
South-East Asia Region

36.6%
African Region

23.2%
High Income Countries

Figure 1. Lifetime prevalence of women experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner, or sexual violence by a non-partner[3]

[1] United Nations General Assembly. 1993. *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*. Available online at http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm.
[2] World Health Organization (WHO). 2013. *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*. Geneva: WHO.
[3] WHO. 2013.

WHAT DRIVES VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS?

Gender inequality is the root cause of violence against women and girls. **Gender inequality** is the unequal distribution of power, resources, opportunity and value between men and people of other genders, that positions and privileges men and boys over people of other genders.[4]

Gender inequality drives violence against women and girls in four key ways (Figure 2). These are the factors (termed the **gendered drivers**) that most consistently predict violence against women and girls, and explain its gendered patterns.[5] These drivers work to create the underlying social context in which violence against women and girls occurs.

Condoning of violence against women	Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life	Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women	Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity

Figure 2. Gendered drivers of violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls is always a manifestation of gender inequality, however gender inequality does not look the same in all places. The gendered drivers intersect with a number of other factors that can lead to increased or decreased risk of violence occurring in different settings. These are called **risk and protective factors**, and the way these factors intersect is primarily understood using the **socio-ecological model.** The socio-ecological model (Figure 3) provides a conceptual framework for examining the interaction of factors contributing to violence across multiple levels of society: individual, family/relationship, community, society, and global.[6] The factors highlighted in **bold** in Figure 3 illustrate some of the social norms that intersect with other factors to contribute to violence against women and girls in different settings.

In some settings and among certain social groups, gender inequality intersects with other forms of discrimination and disadvantage to increase the risk, severity or frequency of violence occurring.

The term **intersectionality** refers to a conceptual framework that looks to uncover the dynamics of different factors that make up an individual's or group's identity. An intersectional analysis means identifying how these factors interact, to understand how people exercise power over others, or experience discrimination based on different forms of oppression. These factors include gender as well as race and ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, religion, age, and socio-economic status.

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[4] We adopt a non-binary definition of gender and an expansive view of gender inequality that includes all genders.
[5] Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth. 2015. *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*. Melbourne: Our Watch.
[6] Heise, L. 1998. Violence against women: An integrated, ecological framework. *Violence Against Women.* 4(3): 262.
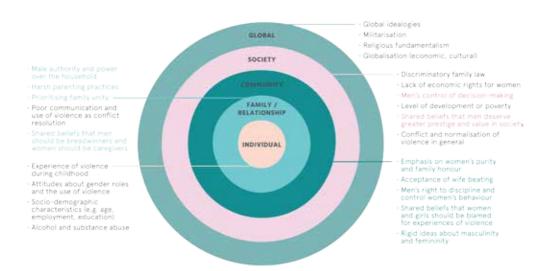
Figure 3. Socio-ecological model

GLOBAL
SOCIETY
COMMUNITY
FAMILY / RELATIONSHIP
INDIVIDUAL

- Global ideologies
- Militarisation
- Religious fundamentalism
- Globalisation (economic, cultural)

- Male authority and power over the household
- Harsh parenting practices
- Prioritising family unity
- Poor communication and use of violence as conflict resolution
- Shared beliefs that men should be breadwinners and women should be caregivers

- Experience of violence during childhood
- Attitudes about gender roles and the use of violence
- Socio-demographic characteristics (e.g. age, employment, education)
- Alcohol and substance abuse

- Discriminatory family law
- Lack of economic rights for women
- Men's control of decision-making
- Level of development or poverty
- Shared beliefs that men deserve greater prestige and value in society
- Conflict and normalisation of violence in general

- Emphasis on women's purity and family honour
- Acceptance of wife beating
- Men's right to discipline and control women's behaviour
- Shared beliefs that women and girls should be blamed for experiences of violence
- Rigid ideas about masculinity and femininity

Figure 3. Socio-ecological model: Factors that can increase the risk of violence against women and girls occurring[7]

Figure 4. Intersectionality

SOCIAL STATUS AND IDENTITY
SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES
DISCRIMINATION AND OPPRESSION

sex, Aboriginality, ethnicity, cultural background, health, colonisation, homophobia, ageism, welfare, racism, ableism, religious discrimination, gender identity, (dis)ability, sexuality, parent/carer status, classism, economic, education, age, sexism, legal/justice, socio-economic status, labour, religion, migration & refugee status
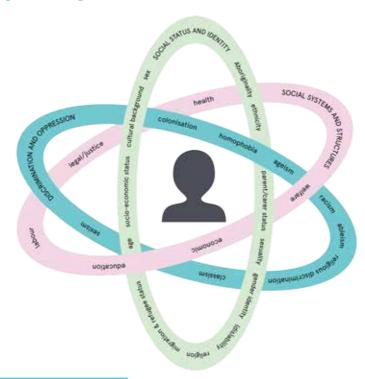
Figure 4. Intersectionality: Understanding the dynamics of power and privilege, and discrimination and oppression in our analyses of violence[8]

[7] Adapted from Fulu, E. and Miedema, S. 2015. Violence against women: Globalizing the integrated ecological model. *Violence Against Women*. 21(12): 1431.

[8] Adapted from Our Watch. 2017. *Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to Change the story*. Melbourne: Our Watch.

WHAT ARE SOCIAL NORMS?

Within the socio-ecological model, social norms are one of the many different factors that contribute to violence against women and girls in different settings. A **social norm** is a collectively held belief about what others in the group *actually* do (what is typical) or what others in the group *ought* to do (what is appropriate).[9] This is the difference between **descriptive norms** and **injunctive norms** (Figure 5). There are three components to social norms:

- A specific shared belief about what the social norm is;
- The reference group that holds that shared belief; and
- Social sanctions or rewards that regulate group adherence to the social norm.

Social norms are shared beliefs about typical or appropriate behaviour within a social group	
Descriptive norms	**Injunctive norms**
A shared belief about what is **typical** in my reference group.	A shared belief about what is **appropriate** in my reference group.
For example:	For example:
It is common for the men in my community to beat their wives.	*In my community, it is acceptable for a man to beat his wife is she disobeys him.*
Among my group of friends, women are typically the primary breadwinners in their households.	*My friends think that women should be the primary breadwinners in the household.*

Figure 5. Social norms can include both descriptive norms and injunctive norms

What is the difference between norms, attitudes and behaviours?

Often attitudes and norms are used or discussed interchangeably, but are two different concepts. A norm is a collectively shared belief about what is considered typical and appropriate behaviour in a given setting and social group. An attitude is an individually held belief that assesses whether something is good, bad, sacred, taboo, or otherwise. A behaviour is what an individual actually does.

This distinction is important because attitudes and behaviours sometimes match and reflect norms, but sometimes they can be different, such as where an individual disagrees with an accepted social norm. For example, a man may believe that using physical violence to discipline his wife and children is harmful, despite a community-level norm that justifies wife beating and harsh parenting practices under specific circumstances. His behaviour might therefore be different from the social norm.

[9] This section is adapted from Bicchieri, C. 2017. *Norms in the wild: How to diagnose, measure, and change social norms.* New York: Oxford University Press; Alexander-Scott, M., Bell, E. and Holden, J. 2016. *Shifting social norms to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG)*. London: DFID VAWG Helpdesk; Heise, L. 2011. *What works to prevent partner violence? An evidence overview.* London: STRIVE Research Consortium; WHO and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). 2010. *Preventing intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women: Taking action and generating evidence.* Geneva: WHO; Paluck, E. L. and Ball, L. 2010. *Social norms marketing aimed at gender based violence: A literature review and critical assessment.* New York: International Rescue Committee.

Social norms exist within **reference groups** (Figure 6). These are the social groups or networks that are important to an individual when they are making a decision about how to act in different situations. For example, a reference group could include a person's extended family, friendship groups, neighbours, co-workers, religious authority, cultural group, and local leaders. Reference groups shift depending on the shared belief in question, and individuals are influenced by multiple reference groups, across different beliefs and behaviours, over time.

When working on social norm change, identifying the reference group for a specific social norm requires careful research with the target population.

We need to know exactly who the reference group is, because it is their shared beliefs that we want to target and change.

Social norms are reinforced and regulated by **social sanctions** and **rewards**. These are the assumed consequences that follow when an individual either transgresses or complies with a social norm. Someone who fails to meet a social norm within their reference group is likely to experience negative consequences, such as shaming, stigmatisation, rejection or exclusion from the group, or violence and abuse in some cases. Someone who is believed to meet a social norm will experience positive consequences, such as status in their family, friendship circle or
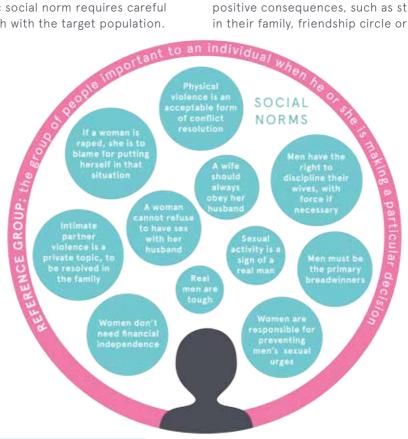

Figure 6. Social norms exist within reference groups

community, or the perception by others that they are a "good" man/husband/son or woman/daughter/wife.

These sanctions and rewards work by encouraging compliance with the social norm, so that an individual will be motivated to act in a certain way – at least in terms of their external behaviour – in order to belong to their social group. Importantly, these consequences do not have to actually take place. It is enough that members of the reference group believe they will, and this what guides their behaviour.

> Social norms are both reflected in and reinforced by other factors across the socio-ecological model. Norms are visible in individual, community and institutional behaviours and practices, such as parenting practices, cultural rites of passage, and workplace processes around hiring and remuneration. Norms are also evident in community and societal structures, such as legislation (formal) and family or community hierarchies (informal).[10]

Social norms create expectations about typical and appropriate behaviour within different social groups, and sanctions and rewards ensure adherence to those expectations. In this way, social norms act like an invisible and informal legal system, determining standards of behaviour and systems for compliance.

But social norms are also more powerful than formal legal systems. For example, even though many countries have laws that criminalise intimate partner violence, we know that this violence continues, in part because there are social norms holding the violent behaviour in place.

HOW DO SOCIAL NORMS CONTRIBUTE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS?

Social norms are shared beliefs within specific reference groups. Figure 7 provides some examples of how these beliefs can be positive or negative, or can promote respectful or harmful behaviours and attitudes. However, what is considered respectful or harmful will also always reflect the values and background of the specific reference group – there might be different examples that you could think of from your own social group.

Positive social norms	Negative social norms
People in my community typically do not use drugs.	If young people in our community can't find work, it is typical for them to start engaging in criminal behaviour.
In our family, if someone gives you a gift you should always reciprocate with a gift of equal or greater value.	Among my friends, it is acceptable to drink alcohol and then drive a car.
It is appropriate for young people to contribute to household decision-making.	It is acceptable for teachers to physically discipline students in some circumstances.

Figure 7. Social norms can be about positive or negative behaviour

[10] Our Watch et al. 2015.

A violent behaviour may be directly held in place by social norms, such as where there is a shared belief that the violent behaviour is typical and/or appropriate within the reference group. For example, the belief that it is acceptable for a man to use physical violence to discipline his wife if he thinks she has disobeyed him.

In other cases, violent behaviours may be underpinned or perpetuated by social norms that create situations in which violence often occurs. For example, shared beliefs about family privacy, women's independence, male sexual entitlement, honour and purity, youth sexuality, the acceptability of divorce, and decision-making within the household can all contribute to creating situations in which violence is more likely to take place.

Violence against women and girls is the product of a number of factors across the socio-ecological model, of which social norms are one key part. Structural factors such as access to resources, existing infrastructure and institutions, legal and policy frameworks, conflict or instability, socio-economic development, and religious or political ideologies also impact upon women's and girls' experiences of violence.

This has important consequences for the prevention of violence against women and girls. It means that programs targeted at social norm change must be implemented alongside various other initiatives that aim to address other factors, in order to reinforce change across all levels.

Most of these are **gender norms** – widely held beliefs about what is typical behaviour for different genders, based on constructions of masculinity and femininity within different social groups. Gender norms shape how individuals identify as male, female, or non-binary. They shape their social and intimate relationships, their sexuality, and the allocation of power and resources within family, community and society.

The use of violence against women and girls is often a manifestation of dominant constructions of **masculinity** based on male dominance, aggression, sexual entitlement, toughness, and power over others (whether real or perceived). If there are shared expectations within a social group that men control women, then physical and sexual force are often seen as 'legitimate' ways to exert this control.

Violence against women and girls also reflects prevailing constructions of **femininity**, based on female docility, submissiveness, caregiving, childbearing, domesticity and reserved sexuality. If there are shared expectations within a social group that women and girls will submit to male authority and reside primarily in the domestic sphere, then physical and sexual force may be used to 'discipline' women believed to transgress these expectations.

Social norms and gender norms that contribute to violence against women and girls

Masculinity	· Men should be the primary breadwinners within the family. · Real men have strong sexual appetites and need sex all the time. · Real men are tough and should defend their reputation, with force if necessary. · Men hold power in public and private life and are beyond reproach for their harmful behaviours.
Femininity	· Women are typically financially dependent on their husband or partner. · A woman's most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family. · It is not appropriate for women to make decisions or participate in political spaces. · It is normally a woman's responsibility to avoid getting pregnant.
Intimate partner violence	· Physical violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflict in a relationship. · Violence is a private family matter and others should not intervene. · It is not acceptable for women to seek divorce, even if their husband is abusive. · Good mothers tolerate violence in order to keep their family together. · A good wife is docile and obedient.
Sexual violence	· Girls should be responsible for making sure they don't tempt men's uncontrollable sexual urges. · Men are entitled to sex. · If a woman is raped, she is usually to blame for putting herself in that situation. · If a woman is raped, she should not report it to the police to protect the family dignity. · A sex worker cannot claim she was raped because that is part of her job.
Violence against girls	· Girls' purity or virginity should be protected to ensure the family's and community's honour and reputation. · Women should stay in the home, so it is acceptable not to provide girls with education and employment opportunities. · Physical punishment is an acceptable or normal part of rearing and disciplining a child.

Figure 8. Examples of harmful social norms and gender norms that contribute to violence against women and girls in different settings[11]
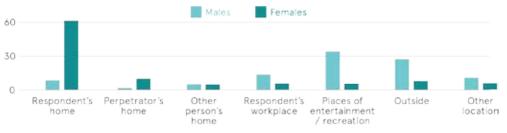
[11] Adapted from WHO and LSHTM. 2010.

WHAT ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN?

A feminist approach to understanding violence against women and girls does not conclude that men do not experience violence, or that women do not use violence. However, there are strong gendered patterns in the way women and men experience violence. There is a substantial body of international evidence that consistently demonstrates that violence against women and girls is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men. Similarly, the violence experienced by men is predominantly perpetrated by men. Rates of violence based on gender are "large and consistent".[12] For example, the 2012 Personal Safety Survey in Australia found that around 95% of all victims of physical and sexual violence (both male and female) reported experiencing acts of violence (physical or sexual assault, or threats) from a male perpetrator.[13]

The same study in Australia found that women are more likely to experience violence by a male partner or other known man, often in the home, while men are more likely to experience violence by other men in public places (Figure 8).[14] Women were also more likely to experience sexual violence since age 15 compared with men (19% of women compared with 5% of men), while men were more likely to experience physical violence compared with women (48% of men compared with 34% of women). These data reflect similar patterns found with studies on interpersonal violence in other settings.[15]

'Places of entertainment/recreation' includes pubs, nightclubs, sporting venues, etc. 'Outside' includes on a street, laneway, park, carpark, etc. 'Other location' includes place of study, at a motel/service apartments, while using or waiting for public transport, in a vehicle, etc.

Figure 9. Location of most recent incident of physical assault by a male perpetrator[16]

Across and within countries there are multiple models of masculinity (ways to be a man). However, often the most dominant or valorised models promote narrow ideals of manhood, that tend to emphasise male assertiveness and aggression, and privilege men over others.[17] These gender norms intersect with violence-supportive attitudes that can translate into men's use of violence against people of all genders.[18]

[12] Kimmel, M. 2002. "Gender symmetry" in domestic violence. *Violence Against Women.* 8(11): 1332. P. 1343.
[13] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). 2013. *Personal Safety, Australia 2012, Cat. No. 4906.0.* Canberra: ABS. Available online.
[14] ABS. 2013.
[15] See, eg, Kimmel. 2002.
[16] ABS. 2013.

[17] Connell, R. W. and Messerschmidt, J. W. 2005. Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society.* 19(6): 829.
[18] Poteat, V. P., Kimmel, M. S. and Wilchins, R. 2011. The moderating effects of support for violence beliefs on masculine norms, aggression, and homophobic behaviour during adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence.* 21(2): 434.

The UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence is the largest multi-country study on men's perpetration of violence in the Asia-Pacific region. The study also captured key data on men's own experiences of sexual victimisation and perpetration of sexual violence against other men. Across the nine sites, between 1% and 8% of men reported that they had ever perpetrated rape of another man or men. This is considerably lower than men's reported perpetration of rape of women and girls (partner and non-partner), which varied between 9% and 63% across all sites. Importantly, most men who had raped another man or men had also raped a woman in their lifetime (Figure 9), illustrating that there is considerable overlap between violence against women and violence against men.[19]

22%

of all respondents who had never raped a man, 22% had raped a woman in their lifetime

71%

of all respondents who had raped a man, 71% had also raped a woman in their lifetime

Figure 10. Overlap between reports of raping a man and raping any woman (partner or non-partner), across all men in the UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific[20]

There are key overlaps between violence against women and violence against men that indicate the need for a holistic approach to violence prevention that engages everyone, regardless of gender, to challenge and change harmful social norms. Gender norms that promote ideals of masculinity based on men's power over women and children, dominance, and toughness also underpin both forms of violence, and can lead to men's experiences of abuse during childhood and sexual violence during adulthood.[21] Importantly, transforming rigid gender norms, challenging violence-supportive norms, and promoting respectful relationships regardless of gender will lead to a reduction in both forms of interpersonal violence.

19 Fulu, E., Warner, X., Miedema, S., Jewkes, R., Roselli, T. and Lang, J. 2013. *Why do some men use violence against women and how can we prevent it? Quantitative findings from the United Nations Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific.* Bangkok: UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UN Volunteers.
20 Fulu et al. 2013.

21 Fulu et al. 2013; Fulu, E., Miedema, S., Roselli, T., McCook, S., Chan, K. L., Haardörfer, R. and Jewkes, R. 2017. Pathways between childhood trauma, intimate partner violence, and harsh parenting: Findings from the UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific. *Lancet Global Health.* 5: e512.

HOW DO WE CHANGE SOCIAL NORMS?

Social norms can be very *sticky*, but they are not *fixed*. There is growing global evidence that social norms can be changed when the shared beliefs or expectations are changed, or when new norms are created. The goal of social norm change is to create new positive norms and shared expectations within our target reference group or groups. In the context of preventing violence against women and girls, we want to create positive change against the gendered drivers of violence (Figure 2), in order to build gender equality and cultures of non-violence. This section does not provide a detailed 'how-to' for social norm change, but it does outline the key considerations and components that should inform all work on social norm change.

Changing social norms: Thinking about descriptive and injunctive norms

Often campaigns and programs on violence against women and girls focus their key messages on awareness raising about the prevalence, patterns and consequences of a specific type of violence. While this is important knowledge, stand-alone awareness raising activities are generally not effective in creating long-term behaviour and norm change. This is largely because awareness raising often uses descriptive norms, and does not reinforce a new social norm across multiple platforms over time.

Statements about descriptive norms set a standard of behaviour that can act as a magnet by spreading the idea that the behaviour is more common or typical than it actually is. They also often fail to provide information to the target audience about what the positive and desirable behaviour is.

Statements about injunctive norms create expectations around acceptable or appropriate behaviour, and can work to ban or discourage harmful acts and attitudes. This is important for social norm change because they can be used to explain or demonstrate what the new social norm is.

There are many different approaches and strategies that can be used to transform social norms around violence against women and girls. These include social and economic empowerment, community mobilisation, parenting programs, peer education and training, organisational development, schools-based programs, advocacy campaigns, and relationship-level skills-building programs.[12] The ideal approach for a given social norm change intervention will depend on a number of considerations, including context, available resources, the type of violence and the norm in question. Figure 10 outlines four key steps that cut across these different approaches to achieve social norm change.

Initiatives that aim to address violence against women and girls by changing harmful social norms must be evidence-based and theory-driven, and tailored to the specific context and audience. This means they need to be informed by **formative research** that has identified clearly the social norm to be addressed. All work to address violence against women and girls should be guided

[12] Heise. 2011; Alexander-Scott et al. 2016; Fulu, E. and Kerr-Wilson, A. 2015. *What works to prevent violence against women and girls: Paper 2: Interventions to prevent violence against women*. South Africa: What Works to Prevent Violence Global Programme.

Four keys steps to effective and lasting social norm change	
1. Identify the harmful social norm	· Conduct formative research to identify the social norm: What is the shared belief, who is the reference group, what social sanctions or rewards reinforce the norm, and what other factors interact with the norm to contribute to violence against women and girls?
2. Change social expectations	· Weaken the norm by shifting individual attitudes. · Promote public discussion and engagement around the norm. · Promote a new positive norm with further opportunities for public discussion and engagement.
3. Publicise the change	· Use role models to publicise benefits of the new norm. · Avoid reinforcing the negative norm by focusing on injunctive statements. · Develop an inclusive diffusion strategy to help spread change beyond the initiative.
4. Reinforce the new norm	· Provide opportunities to practice the positive behaviour, to make it the new normal. · Create new social sanctions and rewards that will ensure adherence to the new norm. · Work to reinforce the new norm by advocating for policy and legal reform.

Figure 11. Key steps to generating and maintaining social norm change[13]

by **ethics and safety** considerations, implemented alongside careful **monitoring**, and through **reflective practice**. This will ensure the initiative is responsive to the needs of survivors, any challenges are dealt with as they arise, and lessons learned are fed back into implementation over time. Finally, a strong **evaluation** should be conducted that focuses on evidence-building and knowledge-sharing, so that we continue to expand our understanding of what works for social norm change, and what works to prevent violence against women and girls in the long-term.

HOW DO WE EXPECT CHANGE TO HAPPEN?

Social change is a slow and complex process, is highly context-specific, and is rarely linear. To achieve change on a global scale that leads to the end of violence against women and girls, we will need to work through carefully coordinated and collaborative efforts across all levels of society, with intensive and long-term efforts. These efforts should be informed by the key elements for prevention, outlined in Figure 12.

These pages illustrate our expected timeline of change, incorporating social norm change alongside transformation of structures through investment in prevention infrastructure, and of practices through the growth and strengthening of the global feminist movement.

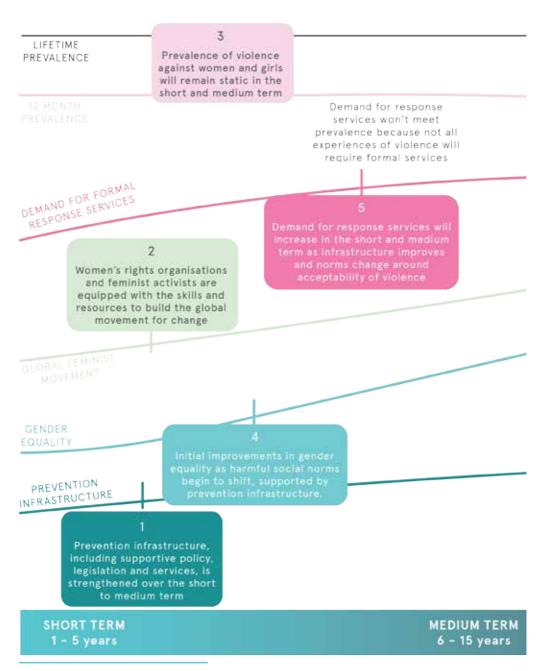[13] Adapted from Alexander-Scott et al. 2016.

LIFETIME
PREVALENCE

3
Prevalence of violence against women and girls will remain static in the short and medium term

12 MONTH
PREVALENCE

Demand for response services won't meet prevalence because not all experiences of violence will require formal services

DEMAND FOR FORMAL
RESPONSE SERVICES

5
Demand for response services will increase in the short and medium term as infrastructure improves and norms change around acceptability of violence

2
Women's rights organisations and feminist activists are equipped with the skills and resources to build the global movement for change

GLOBAL FEMINIST
MOVEMENT

GENDER
EQUALITY

4
Initial improvements in gender equality as harmful social norms begin to shift, supported by prevention infrastructure.

PREVENTION
INFRASTRUCTURE

1
Prevention infrastructure, including supportive policy, legislation and services, is strengthened over the short to medium term

SHORT TERM
1 – 5 years

MEDIUM TERM
6 – 15 years

Figure 12. Key steps to generating and maintaining social norm change[13]

10

Lifetime prevalence of violence against women and girls will only start to decrease in the very long term

7

12 month prevalence of violence against women and girls will decrease as the gendered drivers are addressed

8

The global feminist movement is flourishing and functioning through women's leadership and collaborative efforts to drive ongoing change

6

Measurable and sustained improvements against the gendered drivers of violence over the medium and long term as social norm change continues to be reinforced by efforts at other levels

9

Prevention infrastructure is strong and investment plateaus over the long term

LONG TERM
15+ years

Social norm change is just one integral component within a holistic and multi-level approach to ending violence against women and girls. Just as different risk factors drive violence against women and girls across the various levels of the socio-ecological model, likewise our initiatives to address and prevent violence need to seek and promote change across all levels. This means understanding how social norm change is linked to transformations at other levels and in relation to other risk factors.

For example, as we challenge social norms about men's responsibility for the use of violence against women and girls, this change interacts with law and policy reform around violence, and with changes to justice sector responses to violence, in order to collectively address cultural and legal impunity of perpetrators.

WHAT WORKS FOR PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS?

Preventing violence against women and girls is an evolving field, and we still have a lot to learn. Existing global evidence reveals a number of key elements that are drawn from proven and promising prevention programs from different parts of the world, including social norm change and other approaches (Figure 12). While the evidence is still growing, we know that initiatives that reflect these key elements have a strong potential to have an impact on the gendered drivers and other risk factors that contribute to violence in different settings. These elements are now considered best practice for the prevention of violence against women and girls.
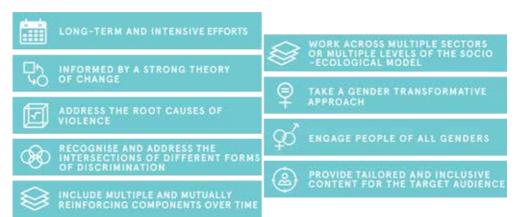

Figure 13. Key elements of successful programs for preventing violence against women and girls

WHAT COMES NEXT?

Create supportive legislative and policy environments

To be effective in creating long-term change in the gendered drivers and other risk factors for violence against women and girls, primary prevention must be implemented within supportive legislative and policy environments. This means national and local governments have a key role to implement and enforce law and policy reforms that remove legal and cultural impunity for perpetrators of violence, promote gender equality and respectful relationships, and provide adequate response and support services for survivors of violence. As illustrated in the timeline in Figure 11, investment in this prevention infrastructure should be a priority in order to support lasting change in other domains.

Keep innovating and focus on ongoing learning

To develop and implement effective prevention and response initiatives to address violence against women and girls globally, researchers, policy-makers, activists and practitioners must understand the scale, scope and nature of the issue. We need to understand patterns and variations across and within countries. We also need to invest in further evidence on the experiences and perspectives of both survivors and perpetrators of violence, and to better understand the pathways and mitigating factors that lead to victimisation and perpetration in different circumstances. A key component of this will be a focus on ongoing learning by implementing all prevention programming alongside rigorous evaluations, to ensure our work continues to be both evidence-based and evidence-building.

Find creative ways to communicate and share findings

Making research and evidence more available to policy makers and practitioners is not enough to create change. There is a need for stronger working partnerships between researchers and communications experts, advocates, activists and policy makers to support and reinforce social norm change. Advocacy is also an important part of research uptake and the women's rights movement has an important role to play in this regard. Globally, there is a burgeoning feminist movement, both on the ground and online, with increasing influence and voice to spread key messages about gender equality and to facilitate widespread social norm change. Moving forwards, finding creative ways to communicate our key findings, in partnership with the global feminist movement, will be key to ensuring prevention efforts are truly holistic, broad-reaching, and inclusive.

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