

# Shifting Social Norms in the Economy for Women's Economic Empowerment

INSIGHTS FROM A PRACTITIONER LEARNING GROUP

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## About The SEEP Network



SEEP is a collaborative learning network. We support strategies that create new and better opportunities for vulnerable populations, especially women, to participate in markets and improve their quality of life. For over 30 years, our members have served as a testing ground for innovative strategies that promote inclusion, develop resilient markets, and enhance the livelihood potential of the worlds' poor.

For more information, visit: [seepnetwork.org](http://seepnetwork.org).  
Follow SEEP on Twitter @TheSEEPNetwork.

## About Oxfam



Oxfam is an international confederation of 20 organizations networked together in more than 90 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty.

For more information, visit [policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk](http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk).  
Follow Oxfam on Twitter @OxfamGBPolicy.

## List of Acronyms

**CSO** – Civil Society Organization

**GBV** – Gender-Based Violence

**HCS** – Household Care Survey

**IMAGES** – International Men and Gender Equality Survey

**IPV** – Intimate Partner Violence

**PLG** – Practitioner Learning Group

**SNAP** – Social Norms Analysis Plot

**SRHR** – Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

**UCDW** – Unpaid Care and Domestic Work

**UNHLP** – United Nations High-Level Panel

**VAC** – Violence Against Children

**VAWG** – Violence Against Women and Girls

**WE-Care** – Women's Economic Empowerment and Care

**WEE** – Women's Economic Empowerment





# Section 1

## **Introduction**

## Section 1

### Introduction

In early 2017, The SEEP Network and Oxfam's Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) in Agriculture Knowledge Hub partnered to facilitate a Practitioner Learning Group (PLG) on "Shifting Social Norms in the Economy to Create Change at Scale." The SEEP PLG process is a method that brings together market development practitioners to help each other overcome practical and urgent challenges. This initiative focused on gathering practitioner insights on shifting social norms in the economy to create change at scale for women's economic empowerment.

The PLG brought together 13 representatives from six different organizations over a period of five months to share challenges and strategies to shift social norms. The discussions within the group were guided by the following learning questions:

What are social norms in the economy?

How do we diagnose social norms in specific contexts?

What strategies are effective at creating change at scale?

How do we measure change in social norms?

This document is a summary of the process and insights from the participants. It provides an introductory overview to social norms and their relationship to women's economic empowerment. It also highlights practical tools, approaches and frameworks that practitioners and researchers can use to diagnose, measure and change social norms. Finally, it calls for more systematic collaboration and learning, as addressing social norms change as part of WEE is still a new area of exploration.

### PLG Participants

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## Defining Social Norms

Social norms are a set of rules that define what is considered normal in a group and can be rules that group members share when they interact with each other. Sometimes, these are rules of conformity and require conformity from all members of the group.

There are different ways of understanding and defining social norms reflected in the cross-disciplinary and multi-faceted nature of its conceptualization. Over the past few decades, several academic disciplines have contributed to the study of social norms and how they influence behaviour. Social norms affect our actions daily and “produce outcomes which are frequently inequitable, and dynamics that are often risky for women and girls” (Keleher and Franklin, 2008).

They have been studied extensively in every discipline of the social sciences, from anthropology to economics to psychology, yet they are often implicit and unspoken, making their mechanisms hard to define and harder to measure. Recent work has built a rigorous theoretical structure around the relationship between beliefs, expectations and observed behaviours associated with social norms, which has given rise to hypotheses about how social norms originate, change and fade.

Academic approaches centre around five key elements:

- 1 A social norm is (or is constructed by) a **shared expectation or informal rule** based on one's beliefs about what others do (descriptive norms), and by one's beliefs about what others think one should do (normative expectations or injunctive norms). An example of a norm commonly underpinning early marriage is the belief that girls should be submissive, docile and shy while marrying early to preserve the honour of her family.
- 2 The relevant “others” or **reference group** is comprised of people whose opinions matter to the individual making the decision. In the example of early marriage, it could be neighbours, members of the community or influential community leaders.
- 3 A social norm is kept in place by **social sanctions**, which could be positive sanctions/rewards (yielding approval and/or popularity) or negative sanctions/disapproval (yielding gossiping and/or violence).
- 4 **Most academics agree that social norms are distinct from behaviours themselves, moral norms** (motivated by conscience – “I believe hitting is wrong no matter what people think”) and **personal attitudes** (independent of others' expectations). The distinction is important because people can comply with social norms even when the norms contradict their personal beliefs or moral norms. For example, a parent may believe their daughter deserves to complete her education but may marry her off early because of social expectations to do so.
- 5 Social norms do not exist in isolation; they are embedded in a relatively thick web of beliefs, values and other norms.

## Glossary of Key Terms

### 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 a reference group may be less relevant.

### Personal attitudes

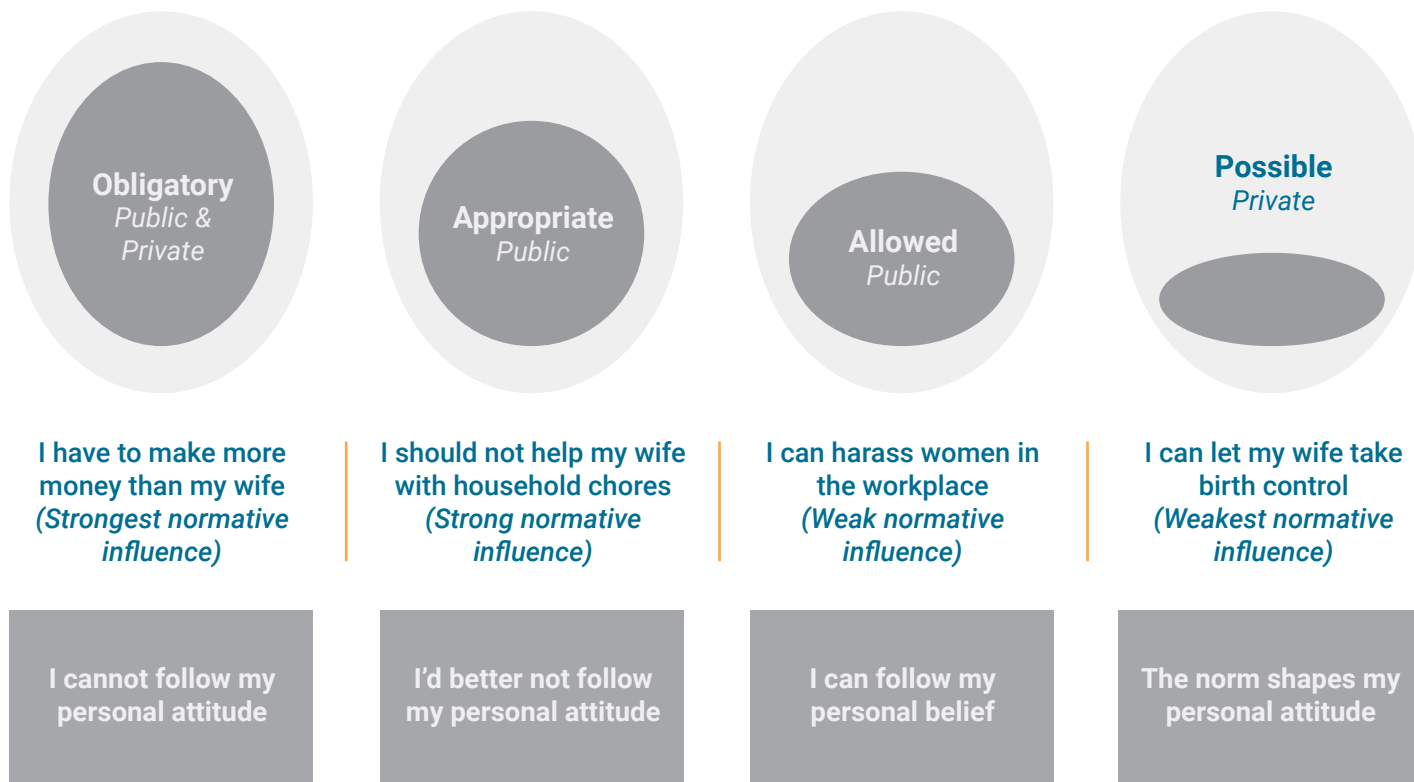
People's individual preferences, which are independent of what others do or what is deemed to be appropriate (i.e. what they would prefer to do if they could choose outside of a social context).

Social norms are not static and, therefore, change as a result of various and overlapping factors happening over time. It is also necessary to understand that not all social norms have the same level of influence and strength. **Figure 1** below outlines how normative influence ("what others think should be done") can vary on a spectrum (strongest, stronger, weaker and weakest). According to Cislighi and Heise, the strength of a norm depends on four characteristics of the practice under normative influence. These four characteristics are:

- 1 Whether the practice is more or less detectable by others.
- 2 Whether the practice is under stronger or weaker sanctions.
- 3 Whether the practice is more interdependent or independent.
- 4 Whether the practice is sustained directly by a corresponding norm, or indirectly by a system of norms.

According to where they fall on the spectrum, different practices would require different interventions. These different interventions can come in the form of facilitating community dialogue to help people find beneficial ways to achieve the goal currently supported by a harmful practice or media campaigns that strengthen people's confidence to stand up and speak against a harmful practice when they witness it.

**Figure 1**  
 Spectrum of Normative Behaviour



Source: Cislighi and Heise (2018)

## Social Norms and Women's Economic Empowerment in Market Systems Development


While a lot of attention has been paid to social norms in health and gender-based violence (GBV) programming as an important factor that drives behaviour, there is less attention paid to the role of social norms in influencing economic behaviour in market system's development and WEE programmes.

Classical economic theory assumes that individuals or organisations make decisions based on rational self-interest. The reason that economic theorists have shown interest in social norms is due to the recognition that, in specific dimensions of economic decision-making, social norms can be more potent than a monetized incentive or deterrence/cost. Meaning, an opportunity for more profit may not incentivise someone to do something new if a norm implies there are negative consequences.

Social norms related to gender inequality influence gendered roles in the economy. Economic norms can define the perceptions about what has value in the economy. What has value and, therefore, higher price or wages may be determined by other extrinsic factors, beyond just the cost of production. The perceptions "if you are working for no pay, then that work has no value" is common. Similarly, servicing a machine is perceived to require more significant skills and technical knowledge and, therefore, has more value than providing care services for people. The belief that something is boring work, dangerous work or exciting work can also impact economic value and, thus, wages. For example, taking care of children may be perceived as tedious work requiring fewer skills and, therefore, less valuable.

Social norms in the economy can contribute to gendered occupational segregation leading to the idea of "men's jobs" vs. "women's jobs." Women are often trapped in low levels of productivity and seniority or in professions that are considered suitable for women. These norms shape and distort markets, economic policy and economic decision-making by influencing cost-benefit analyses and investment decisions. Given that social norms can shape perceived economic value, they affect how investment decisions are made. Social norms that value production and marketing activities over subsistence agriculture or unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) means that when governments are looking at where to invest to spur economic growth, they prioritise investments in "productive activities" rather than invest in alleviating significant care responsibilities or subsistence agriculture. At the household and community level, people often focus on making labour more productive, causing the investments in irrigation equipment to be prioritised over a laundry machine or dishwasher. The opportunity cost of women's time is almost zero, meaning investments are made into TV or radio over things that decrease her time spent on UCDW.

Interventions for women to be economically empowered must be complemented by broader, integrated strategies to address problematic social norms in the economy. Such norms can and often do limit women's choice of economic activities, participation in the paid economy and the benefits they gain. Programmes may promote women within existing market systems but fail to achieve transformational change because they do not challenge the social norms in the economy that systematically discriminate against women in the selected markets. Further, by not addressing the social norms that shape the type and quality of women's paid and unpaid work opportunities, programmes may inadvertently lead to negative outcomes for women, such as increased drudgery and depletion (Chopra and Zambelli, 2017) or risk of violence (Hughes et al, 2015).

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# Section 2

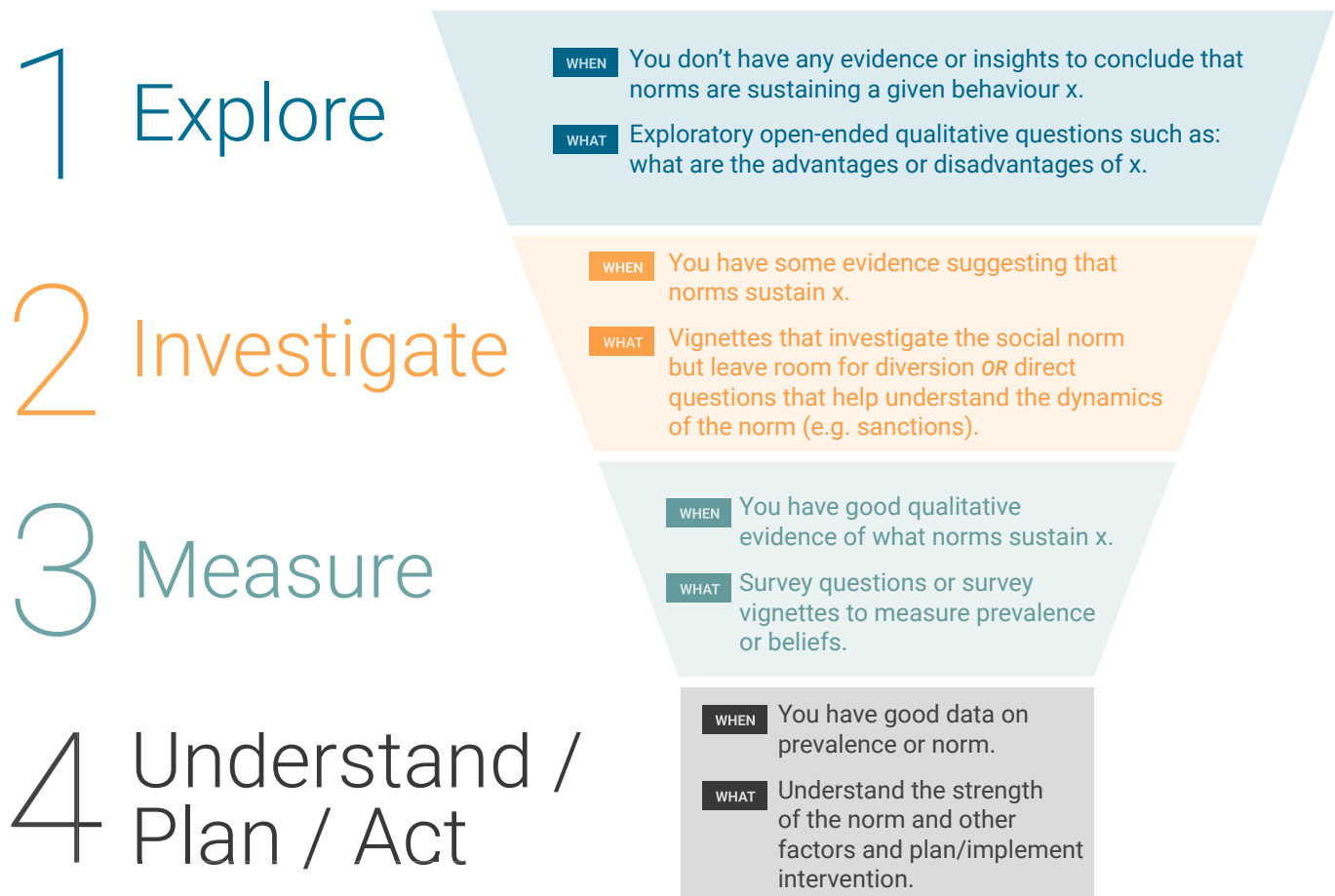
## **Diagnosing Social Norms**

## Section 2 Diagnosing Social Norms

A critical first step in shifting social norms in the economy is to understand and diagnose the underlying norms.

Among the PLG participants, some are diagnosing social norms and assessing social norm changes on an ad hoc basis through wider market development, WEE research and monitoring and evaluation activities (usually in the form of anecdotal evidence). A few have developed research methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to diagnose social norms and measure social norm changes systematically. The varied approaches used reflect the different levels of understanding and evidence on social norms and their influence on a given behaviour, which is depicted in the funnel diagram below (Cislaghi and Heise, 2017).

**Figure 2**  
Spectrum of Normative Behaviour



Many organisations tend to think about norms through a measurement lens, but this is not always a good starting point. The first steps should be to understand if a given behaviour is under the influence of social norms and, if it is influenced, under which norm. The second step is to investigate the norm. After these two steps, the organisation should have a clearer understanding of which norms are at play and how organisations can measure any shifts in the norms.

Based on the discussions within the group and a review of the wider literature, the following approaches have emerged as promising practices:

### **Adopting qualitative or mixed methods approaches**

Qualitative methods have been highlighted as being particularly useful for understanding the nuances and specific contexts in which social norms operate and in identifying the drivers of change. Quantitative methods, when used together with qualitative methods (a mixed methods approach), are particularly helpful in testing the associations between social norms and certain behaviours as well as assessing the strength of their influence. Furthermore, once the key social norms are identified, indicators capturing key elements of the norms (such as social approval/disapproval) can be included in surveys to measure changes in social norms.

### **Using vignettes**

Vignettes tell short stories about imaginary yet relatable characters in specific settings. Asking respondents about hypothetical scenarios, which are relatable can help overcome social desirability bias and effectively reveal respondent's attitudes, beliefs and expectations (Bicchieri, 2016). Another approach is to ask questions about a typical person in the respondent's community rather than the respondent.

### **Investigating meta norms**

Asking general questions around what makes a good woman and a good man (differentiated by age/marital status) is a good way of identifying meta norms that influence multiple behaviours (Heise and Manji, 2016). Moreover, it enables an exploration of the wider fabric of social norms, which is useful when one does not know what types of social norms on which to focus. Asking respondents how they feel about these sayings can further help differentiate between personal beliefs and norms.

### **Simplifying the measurement of norms**

Field experience demonstrates that existing strategies for measuring social norms are unnecessarily complex. However, quick and simple ways to measure norms do exist. One form of measurement, for instance, focuses on measuring perceptions of anticipated sanctions for non-compliers (Cislaghi and Heise, 2016).

### **Adopting an action research approach**

Using the diagnostic process as an opportunity to get respondents to both identify social norms and also reflect critically on their perceptions/beliefs through group exercises and open discussion is an important start to the change process.

### **Understanding how social norms interact with other contextual factors**

Harmful behaviours are influenced not only by social norms but other often interlinked structural, social, material and individual factors. A common challenge facing practitioners wanting to adopt a holistic approach to shifting behaviours is understanding how these factors interact and reinforce/impede one another. Diagnostic approaches that take these factors into consideration can reveal findings that help practitioners identify the pathways through which changes in norms can occur. This can be done through a broader review of the literature on the socio-economic and structural context of the area of study or asking specific questions on how social expectations and behaviours have been shaped by other factors (i.e. if there is positive deviance, ask which factors enabled respondents to behave contrary to what is socially acceptable).

The process of diagnosing norms might provide a long list of potential options, which might lead to questions such as: How do we identify which norms have the greatest potential for change? How do we identify which norm might be the best avenue for change? How do we identify the delivery mechanism for changing that norm?



Section 3  
**Strategies  
for Shifting  
Social Norms  
to Create  
Change at  
Scale**

## Section 3

### Strategies for Shifting Social Norms to Create Change at Scale

The second step in the discussion focused on specific norms shared by each of the PLG participants, the strategies they used to shift these norms and what they learned in the process.

#### Key Social Norms in the Economy

- **Gendered segregation of crops:** Cash crops are often considered to be “male crops” while food crops are “female crops.” Men tend to control the management of cash crops and income from it, and women oversee food crops. This, therefore, limits the economic opportunities for women.
- **Women are considered “farmers’ wives,” not farmers:** As a result, women are not given priority for extension advice nor for access to productive land/resources. Their crops are considered secondary importance.
- **Occupational segregation:** Certain kinds of careers and roles are appropriate for women. Opportunities available to women are limited by perpetuation of stereotypes such as “women are not good at math, and are not suited for highly technical fields such as aerospace engineering, robotics, etc.”
- **Perceptions of skills required for productive versus reproductive work:** People perceive reproductive work to be petty and low-skilled (e.g. people perceive animal rearing as requiring more skills than raising children).
- **Unpaid care work is not recognized as valuable:** Women are expected to spend time taking care of household chores, children and elderly, which is not only considered low skilled work, but also earns no economic returns. It also takes away from the time they can invest in “productive” work.
- **Limited property and inheritance rights:** Although women may be able to own property legally, they are expected to renounce their rights to preserve a good relationship with their family.
- **Traditional gender roles:** Women are expected to marry, have children and care for elderly, while men are expected to earn the living of their family. If women work outside the house, they may have trouble getting married or are told that their children and families might suffer.



## Effective Strategies/Approaches to Addressing Social Norms in the Economy

The discussions with PLG participants on effective strategies to address social norms provide a range of approaches. The strategies can be summarized in:

### Engaging couples and communities as partners in change

Gender synchronized approaches that include working with men and women, rather than just men or women alone, is a key driver of sustainable change. This includes creating a space for communication and dialogue between partners to recognise and jointly address problematic social norms within their own relationships and communities. Partners working together have also been shown to have greater ability in challenging social norms (a key step in dismantling an existing social norm) compared to individuals acting on their own. Extending reflection sessions to other community members or key influencers from the reference group is necessary for changes in beliefs and behaviours to be coordinated, enabling social norm change to occur.

### PLG Examples

Promundo and CARE's approach to gender transformative programming reflected in the [Journeys of Transformation](#) programme, among others, involves 17 group educational activities where men and women are encouraged to jointly reflect on rigid gender norms, to examine their personal attitudes and beliefs and to question traditional ideas about household decision-making, division of labour, caring for children and sharing household tasks (Journeys of Transformation Training Manual, 2011). Through role plays, case studies and exercises, they demonstrate the disproportionate responsibility that women have for care work as a starting point for the discussion on engaging men and boys in care work. When couples recognized that there is economic value in working together, the conversation becomes more productive. The dialogues are seen as paramount in changing the level of influence that women have in the household and relationships dynamics.

The [MARS's Vision for Change](#) programme approach combines Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) methodology with couples' dialogues and group discussions on gender. They have set up gender committees in the communities that mediate any issues that might arise. They have also identified male champions in the communities who highlight how couples are jointly working on the farm and making decisions.

### Adopting an integrated system wide approach

Working with other organisations directly or through partnerships at different levels of the ecosystem is critical in creating social norm change. At the organisational level, this would involve critical reflections on gender norms affecting staff. At the community level, it involves awareness-raising through different methods. At the national level, it involves organised diffusion of key messages through wider public engagement/social marketing and coordinating with policy makers and the private sector to tackle institutional norms and introduce appropriate policies/legislation.

### PLG Examples

[CARE's Pathways to Empowerment Program](#) adopts an integrated approach, which starts with engaging staff in gender analysis and personal reflection to understand how social norms affect them, that social norm change is possible and that they are able to commit to activities that can create the change that is needed. This is accompanied by critical reflection and gender dialogues with both households (both men and women) as well as the wider community using tools such as outcome mapping and working with influential figures to become agents of change. Critically, it involves working with market actors on breaking down barriers and creating face-to-face spaces for buyers and producers to come together.

Oxfam's [WE-Care](#) programme in Zimbabwe works with local community support organisations and has seen that building the capacity of allies, such as women's rights organisations and other CSOs, can produce a critical level of change. Embedding knowledge and an understanding of social norms within these organisations can create change agents on the ground.

### Using creative channels of communication to reinforce messages that challenge both empirical and normative expectations

Radios, community theatre, posters and videos have been found to be important mediums for raising awareness of problems with a current norm and presenting alternatives or showing characters that are identifiable but deviate from expectation. To ensure that the messages don't inadvertently reinforce a harmful social norm or behaviour, there needs to be a combination of normative messaging that elicits strong emotions.

### Working with role models and champions to challenge prevailing norms in the communities and begin to build a social movement

Identifying, engaging with and publicizing local role models and positive deviants in the community is a useful way of challenging both empirical and normative expectations. Furthermore, these individuals, families or members of the community can become advocates within their own communities and begin to build a social movement.

#### PLG Example

Oxfam's [WE-Care](#) programme has been engaging WE-Care Champions and role model families as a way of challenging the descriptive norm that men don't do care work by showing that men can and do in fact do care work. They also address the belief that care work is not skilled or valuable by communicating its benefits and the benefits of sharing it to the family and larger society.

### Analysing risks and engaging opinion leaders from the initiation of the programme

Identifying the key opinion makers, such as traditional or religious leaders, government officials and media personalities, and working with them has been particularly important for ensuring the legitimacy of new information that goes against the current norm, widely disseminating messages and shaping public opinion. It has also been critical in contexts where a backlash is possible as opinion leaders can play a key role in risk mitigation.

#### PLG Example

Oxfam's [WE-Care](#) programme also engages male religious and traditional leaders to promote care work as part of men's responsibility and not just as a way of helping their wives.

### Increasing women's capacity and technical knowledge

Providing women with specific knowledge and technical skills to increase production, engage in higher income value chains or pursue non-traditional vocations can help women increase their income and supports economic independence and a greater role in household decision-making.

#### PLG Examples

[CARE's Pathways](#) and [MARS' Vision for Change](#) programmes in Côte d'Ivoire use Farmer Field Schools to train women farmers on sustainable agriculture, nutrition, gender, market capacities and access to resources. In the Pathways programme, some of the early studies are showing that, as result of the increased technical knowledge, women farmers have increased production, resulting in a shift in household dynamics with women becoming more respected within the household. The cocoa board in Côte d'Ivoire has now adopted the Farmer Field School model and is offering it in other parts of the country.

## Increasing the visibility of women in the market and promoting them to leadership roles


Promoting the visibility of women in markets and emphasizing their role as a market actor can help counter norms about the role of women. By creating opportunities for women to take on more visible leadership roles within farmer groups and creating spaces for women producers to interact with male buyers, there is an opportunity to counter prevailing narratives of the market being a male domain.

### PLG Example

One of the strategies used on the [CARE Pathways](#) programme was to set up women as chairs of marketing committees and in other leadership positions, encouraging women to access the types of large capital resources (equipment, bank accounts and large loans) that enable them to compete on equal footing with men. They also set up structured exchanges between largely male market actors and women-led producer groups and marketing committees to create spaces that challenge the norm, allowing women to engage on equal terms and establish cooperative relationships and fair transactions. Establishing farmer field days where women are out in public demonstrating their techniques and interacting with market actors like input suppliers and buyers helped establish women as credible market players. Demonstrating women's roles in public spaces and inviting government officials to these big events helps create change.

## Engaging with policy-makers and businesses to shift institutional norms

For social norm change to occur at scale, it is necessary to not only shift social norms held within communities but also within institutions. These are norms that prevent businesses from hiring women in certain occupations and promoting/fairly remunerating them. These are also norms that encourage VAWG/sexual harassment in workplaces, norms that prioritise investments in the marketized economy over the non-market/unpaid economy and norms that perpetuate women's underrepresentation and decision-making in cooperatives. Identifying and influencing key actors within these institutions to promote positive social norms within their own organisations and act as the first movers in their industries/sectors has emerged as a key strategy in starting the norm change process within institutions. Before engaging them, however, it is important to understand the existing narratives, priorities and agendas of the institutions and identify key entry points within them.



Section 4  
**Measuring  
Change in  
Norms**

## Section 4

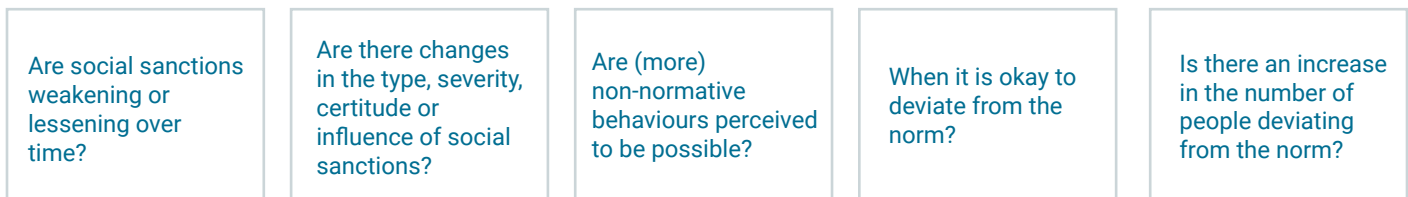
### Measuring Change in Norms

Like the process of diagnosing social norms, the approach to assessing change in social norms among the PLG participant organisations varies from ad hoc to the use of a set of different qualitative and quantitative tools. The various approaches used by organisations reflect the different levels of understanding and evidence they have gathered on particular social norms and their influence on a given behaviour. Drawing on the Social Norms diagnosis framework shared by Ben Cislighi, measurement approaches should be designed once you have good qualitative evidence of the prevalence of norms. The group examined three different organisational approaches to measuring changes in social norms:

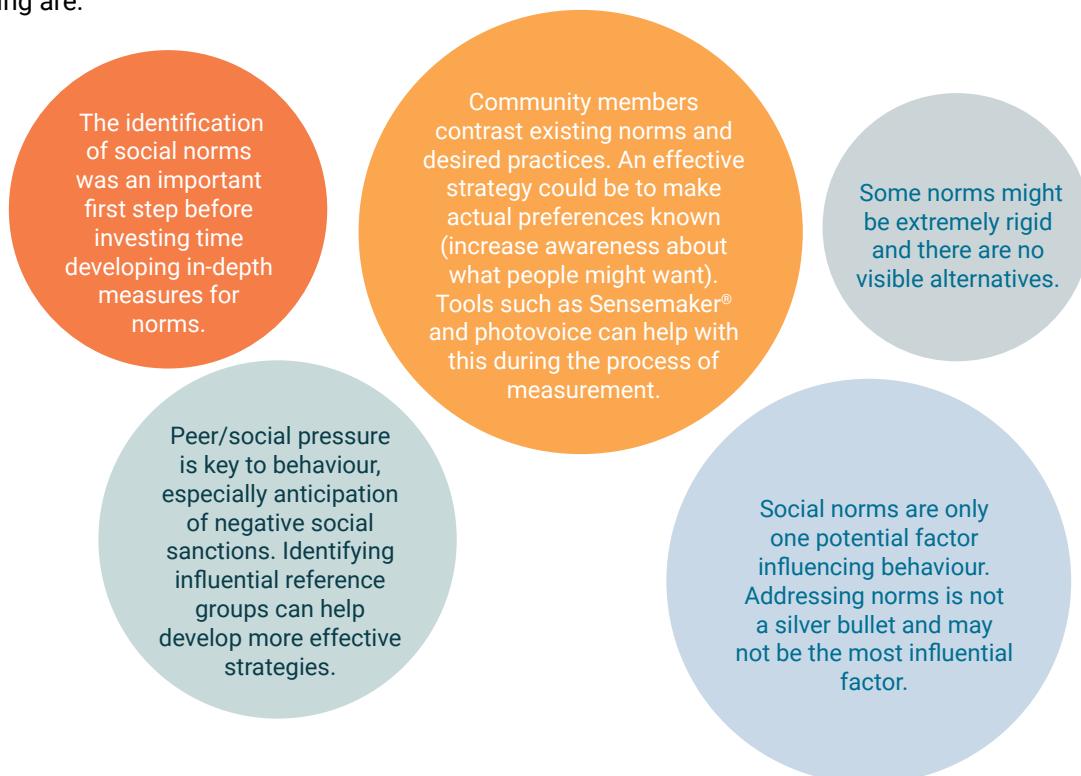
#### a Applying Social Norms Theory to Measurement - CARE USA

[CARE's Social Norms Analysis Plot \(SNAP\) tool](#) is a framework developed to measure if and how norms are changing through the use of qualitative vignettes and survey questions. It breaks down norms into five different components: empirical expectations, normative expectations, sanctions, sensitivity to sanctions and exceptions. The framework also identifies potential signs of change for each one. Though developed as a monitoring tool, SNAP can also be used to investigate whether a behavior is under normative influence and construct vignettes to examine specific norms.

The SNAP data can be used to analyse the following:



The SNAP has been developed based on pilots in Ethiopia and Sri Lanka and some of the initial insights that can inform programming are:



## b Measuring Social Norms Around Violence and Gender in Tanzania and Uganda – Promundo

There is increasing interest in the role that social norms play in influencing violence-related behaviours.

[The International Men and Gender Equality Survey \(IMAGES\)](#) survey is a household survey that traditionally focused on men's and women's attitudes and behaviours on a variety of gender-related topics (i.e. gender norms, household dynamics, intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), violence against children (VAC) and adolescent sexuality).

By integrating a few additional questions on norms into this survey, the Promundo team seeks to understand the difference between individual attitudes and social norms, specifically with respect to different types of behaviours, such as violence. How do attitudes and norms operate jointly to impact violence? Specific areas of inquiry are:

What are the differences between individual attitudes and social norms with respect to gender and violence?

How do attitudes and social norms relate to violence and other behavioural outcomes?

How do attitudes and norms operate jointly to influence violence-related behaviour?

What are the implications for programming and research (particularly non-social-norms specific surveys)?

The survey was administered by trained sex-matched interviewers using electronic tablets. The survey was undertaken in five regions in Tanzania (Dar es Salaam, Kagera, Tabora, Iringa, Dodoma) and one region Uganda (Central). For each of the six topics of the survey, we asked respondents to agree or disagree with three types of statements:

### Understanding Adolescent Sexuality



#### Attitude

I think adolescent girls should not have sex before marriage.

#### Empirical Norm

Most adolescent girls in my community engage in sexual relationships before marriage.

#### Normative Expectation

Most people in my community would disapprove of adolescent girls having sex before marriage.

The analysis included comparing rates of respondents' agreement with the three different types of statements as shown above. It also explored associations between attitudes and norms statements, and men's perpetration of IPV. The team ran subgroup analysis to explore alignment between attitudes and norms and its association to IPV perpetration.

In Tanzania, the analysis showed a difference between attitudes vs. empirical norms whereas in Uganda the findings are similar for all statements. Men who agree that women deserve to be beaten (attitude) and agree that most men beat their wives (empirical norm) have higher odds of using IPV. This kind of data allows researchers to investigate the association between attitudes and norms statement and the associated behaviours.

This exercise highlights that it is valuable to ask about social norms and attitudes because it's used to identify nuances in patterns of support for different attitudes and norms and gauge entry-points for normative change interventions.

Given that alignment between positive attitudes and norms is associated with desired behaviour outcomes, programmatic goals could focus on targeting both attitudes and normative environment to create space for change.

## c Measuring Change in Norms Over Time - WE CARE

The [WE-Care](#) programme consists of several components to recognize care work and create more equitable distribution of the responsibility of care work within wider livelihoods interventions, including research, access to care-related public services (e.g., water and electricity), the introduction of time-and-labour saving equipment (e.g., laundry machines and fuel efficient stoves) and, more importantly, shifting social norms. In addition to formative research on norms, WE-Care is measuring change of attitudes and norms related to care work over time through both quantitative and qualitative methods.

### Quantitative

[The Household Care Survey](#) (HCS) is a survey that WE-Care uses before and after an intervention to measure change on a variety of outcome areas, including five areas related to gender roles and the economy:

- The “value” and “skills” accorded to different work activities;
- The division of labour between men and women in households (both paid/productive work and unpaid care work);
- Men’s childhood experience of care work;
- Community expectations; and
- Acceptability of gender-based violence related to care (sanctions).

For norms on the economy, scoping studies have highlighted that men often do not do care work because they consider it to be “petty” or low-skilled work. It is, therefore, important to track people’s perceptions of the value and skills of different types of work. The HCS asks men and women to rank the value of 12 work activities (e.g., cooking, child care, house repair and planting crops) and the skill required to carry them out.

To understand norms and attitudes on gender roles, vignettes outline work distribution between three different couples. These include 1) traditional roles (such as the woman doing most of the care work and the man doing most of the paid/productive work), 2) more equal roles (both the man and the woman do care and paid/productive work), and 3) the situation where the woman does most of the care and paid/productive work. The respondents are asked their opinion of each vignette, how they think other members of their community would respond to each one, and how they would compare the situation to their own household.

WE-Care also collects data on acceptability of sanctions, such as harshly criticizing or beating a woman for a perceived failure to do a care task, and shaming or mocking a man for doing “women’s” care tasks.

In Zimbabwe and Ethiopia, from 2014 to 2015, the programme was able to re-interview 85% of households in the baseline sample after a year. The results highlighted that:

- Men’s participation in WE-Care norms-related activities was associated with men’s relative autonomy in carrying out care (despite negative norms), and with men and women disapproving of the vignette with traditional roles.
- Where men participated in project activities to shift norms, men spent more hours on fuel collection.
- In general, households’ involvement in the project reported men doing more hours of care, while inequality between men and women in care hours decreased.

### Qualitative

The change over time was also measured qualitatively by using Oxfam's [Rapid Care Analysis tool](#). An in-depth qualitative study in Uganda showed that the project impacted men's attitudes towards care work and gendered care relations, but only in combination with wider social and economic changes in communities, such as the introduction of raised cooking stoves so men would not have to squat to cook.

### Associations/hypotheses

[WE-Care](#) is assessing associations between time use and norms, as well as other factors influencing time use: access to public services, access to time-and-labour saving equipment, and childhood experiences (e.g., father's involvement in care activities).

A key lesson has been that interventions that focus on social norms alone may not be as effective. The programme is testing how the introduction of access to public services and time and labour saving equipment has additional impact on behaviours, attitudes and norms related to care work. The programme is also exploring if behaviour change leads to norm change (i.e., if men do more care work, will this change norms?).

## What Do These Three Experiences Illustrate About How to Measure Norms?


Integrating indicators on norms into baseline and end line surveys for the overall project/intervention can help organisations learn from their own experience and build an evidence base.

There are some quick and simple ways of measuring norms change.

When there is good evidence of a link between social norms and specific practices or behaviours, surveys can be used to quantify and statistically confirm the relationship in question.

Using vignettes in surveys is a relatively novel approach in social norm measurement, but it bears promising potential.





Section 5  
**The Way  
Forward**

## Section 5

### The Way Forward

Women and men often occupy different economic spheres in large part due to the social norms that define acceptable roles and behaviours for women and men. In the context of markets, norms and the control of productive assets, gendered occupational roles and care responsibilities often limit women's ability to engage with and benefit from economic opportunities. The discussions in this learning group provide a good starting point for further exploration on how market systems development programmes can shift social norms and meet the goal of women's economic empowerment, but there are challenges that still need to be addressed. The following were identified as being the most common/pressing issues:

Addressing social norms held within communities is not sufficient for changing WEE outcomes. We also need to address harmful institutional norms that prevent women from entering/progressing in certain occupations or sectors of employment and keep them concentrated in the least paid, most insecure parts of the supply chain. How do we engage private/market systems actors to shift social norms around women and men's work in supply chains?

How do we convince traditional donors/funders that this is a crucial component of economic development/market systems projects, but one in which takes longer than your average project life span to take effect?

How do we shift social norms to create change at scale? What are the ways in which we can design interventions so that they are replicable, multiply easily and have uptake by other organisations/institutions? How do we link smaller groups to wider social/feminist movements, promote market systems wide changes, engage men as change agents, etc.?

How do we diagnose multiple factors (including social norms) sustaining a behaviour and assess how the interaction of these factors leads to desired behaviours and norms changes?

How do we identify new threats/unintended consequences (i.e. engaging men in a way that gives them too much power, reinforcing existing harmful behaviours)?

An important aspect of the discussions in this group was to start exploring how market systems programmes can create change at scale as it was clear that not many of the current efforts are focused on this issue. To shift social norms in the economy and create change at scale, market systems development programmes need to:

Start by systematically diagnosing social norms and developing multi-sectoral, multi-level interventions. Many of the programmes in this learning group have focussed on one or two levels (households, communities, market actors and government) but, for change to scale and be sustainable, it is important to work at multiple levels. This requires deliberate and thoughtful collaboration and partnerships between different stakeholders.

Collaborate with other industry actors to bring insights to scale. We learn better when we work together as an industry. We need to bring insights from intervention research to scale by identifying key strategies to reframe and negotiate social norms. These insights can be used to design new interventions that are focused on scale from the beginning.

Develop programme strategies that understand the viral nature of change. Strategies should focus on nudging people towards new ways of thinking or behaving and acting as change agents who can influence other actors that they meet.

In addition to shifting norms, where possible, focus on creating new norms to support changes in behaviours (e.g., open defecation – see box) or strengthening positive norms (e.g. a woman who has marketable skills and contributes to the household finances is a desirable trait for a wife).

#### CREATING A NEW NORM

To change the custom of open defecation, a new norm was created that condoned open defecation through various strategies such as repulsion (by putting feces next to food and having people observe how flies go between the two).

Therefore, to reach enough people to effectively change social norms, we need to work more collaboratively and leverage collective insights from norms change interventions. This will promote policy changes and imbed effective approaches within institutions, creating a cycle of learning.

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