MEASURING CHANGES IN SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS

Practical solutions to a complex problem
REVIEW OF PRACTICES IN MEASURING SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS CHANGE

Claire Hughes and Philly Desai

July 2019
Commissioned by Plan International, but relevant to other development organisations, the review has these objectives:

- **Review approaches and methodologies** for measuring social and gender norms change;
- **Identify effective methodologies and tools** for measuring social and gender norm change
- **Make recommendations** for the most effective methods for measuring social and gender norm change
FINDINGS
There is consensus on what to measure, but not on how to measure it.

Most current approaches are complex and better suited to large-scale outcome/impact evaluations.

A need for simpler approaches is recognized – a specific focus for this review.

There is no “one size fits all” approach, but existing tools can be adapted for new contexts.
A social norm is a pattern of behaviour which people prefer to conform to because:

- They believe others who are important to them conform to it, and
- They believe that others who are important to them expect them to conform to it
- There are rewards and sanctions associated with conforming/not conforming to the expected behaviour

Some practitioners understand social norms more broadly, as “commonly accepted attitudes, behaviours and values”

Gender norms are a subset of social norms as they “express the expected behaviour of people of a particular gender, and often age, in a given social context” (Marcus, 2018)
1. **Explore**: Qualitative exploration of social norms, to identify the norms at play, their strength and influence on behaviour

2. **Investigate**: the dynamics, reference groups, sanctions and rewards, using vignettes or direct questioning

3. **Measure**: Measurement of the prevalence and dispersion of social norms, normally through surveys

4. **Understand, plan, act**: Programme design, correction and adaptation

◆ There is broad agreement that diagnostic research/analysis is essential before designing a measurement strategy

*[From Cislaghi and Heise’s “funnel of social norms exploration and measurement”]*
Social norms diagnosis

- Is a behavior sustained by perceptions of others’ behaviours and expectations?
- Which norms sustain a behavior and is the influence direct or indirect?
- Which reference groups drive the behaviours?
- How strong are the norms? What are the associated rewards and sanctions?
- Are there positive norms that could be strengthened?
- What other factors affect behaviours?

The flower for sustained health: an integrated framework for normative influence and change (Institute for Reproductive Health, 2019)
Consensus around core measures of social norms change:

- Individual behaviour – *What I do*
- Individual attitudes – *What I believe I should do*
- Empirical expectations – *What I think others do*
- Normative expectations – *What I think others expect me to do*
- Rewards and sanctions – social approval or disapproval

- Track these measures in target group and where possible, in reference groups
An Example

CARE’s SNAP framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPONENTS OF A NORM</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
<th>EXAMPLE RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empirical Expectations (EE)</td>
<td>What I think others do</td>
<td>“Once you have got the chance, you have to marry. Your friends are getting married.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative Expectations (NE)</td>
<td>What I think others expect me to do (what I should do according to others)</td>
<td>“…everybody in the community expects adolescent girls…at the age of 13 to 15 years… to get married.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions</td>
<td>Anticipated opinion or reaction of others (to the behavior) – specifically others whose opinions matter to me</td>
<td>“If a girl is not married at age of 15 years, many adolescent girls in the community would insult her saying ‘haftu’, which mean the one who is not needed, or unattractive”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to sanctions</td>
<td>Do sanctions matter for behavior? If there is a negative reaction from others (negative sanction), would the main character change their behavior in the future?</td>
<td>Most girls would change their minds and marry after prolonged insults and isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptions</td>
<td>Under what circumstances would it be okay for the main character to break the norm (by acting positively)?</td>
<td>Girls can refuse marriage if they excel at school and their teachers convince their family to let them continue school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A programme’s approach to measuring changes in social norms needs to be informed by:

- **The centrality of social norms change** in the programme
- **The scale** of the programme
- **What you want to know** about changes in social norms and the **programme contribution** to that And what you want to know about
- **How the data gathered will be used** e.g. for accountability to donor, or for organizational learning
# Identifying an Appropriate Approach to Measuring Social Norms Change

Norm change is central objective - comprehensive approach

- Formative research to identify norms, using open questioning in focus groups
- Investigation of the dynamics and strength of norms, through vignettes and more direct questioning
- Construction of bespoke survey with comparison group using scales and indices to define specific norms
- Several waves of fieldwork to track changes over time

Norm change is one of several outcomes – lighter approach

- Definition of norms through rapid appraisal or local staff knowledge
- Adaption of existing KAP surveys or monitoring tools
- Inclusion of norms questions in existing tools without substantial additional resources
- Can be one off surveys, regular monitoring, or baseline, midline, end line
Objective to *prevent/reduce intimate partner violence* in south Sudan and Somalia

- **Extensive diagnostic research**, using focus groups and vignettes to identify and explore norms at play
- **Identified four “norm areas”** sustaining intimate partner violence
- Constructed **Gender Based Violence Scale** based on 18 items
- Quantitative research using **Randomised Control Trial** with a longitudinal panel survey: baseline, midline and endline
**A LIGHT TOUCH APPROACH**
**ADAPTING THE PROMUNDO IMAGES SURVEY**

- **IMAGES** is a household survey of men’s and women’s attitudes and behaviours on a range of gender-related topics.
- **Promundo** integrated **a few questions on social norms** into the existing survey, to explore relationships between attitudes, behaviour and social norms.
- **Three questions** were asked on each of six topics relating to gender-based violence in Tanzania and Uganda:
  - Individual attitudes to the issue
  - Perception of empirical norm – what most people do
  - Perception of social norm – what most people approve or disapprove of
# QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION APPROACHES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Randomised Control Trials</td>
<td>• Most statistically robust</td>
<td>• Requires control groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Good for establishing programme contribution</td>
<td>• Needs advanced statistical skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Track individual level change over time among a specific group</td>
<td>• Not always practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longitudinal panel surveys</td>
<td>• Track individual level change over time among a specific group</td>
<td>• Hard to maintain the panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Track change at population level</td>
<td>• Expensive and complex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do not sensitise respondents</td>
<td>• Risks sensitising respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longitudinal cross-sectional surveys</td>
<td>• Track change at population level</td>
<td>• Do not track individual change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do not sensitise respondents</td>
<td>• May not pick up specific beneficiary groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Qualitative Data Collection Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Focus group discussions (with or without vignettes) | • Good for understanding norms and how they might be changing  
• Engaging for respondents | • May reinforce “group perspective”  
• Can exclude minority views  
• Hard to track change over time |
| Individual interviews               | • Can access minority groups  
• Encourages positive deviants to speak out  
• Good for key influencers | • May understate normative influences  
• Time consuming/ resource intensive |
| Theory-based studies                | • Verifies the validity of the theory of change and implementation  
• Can be implemented quickly, with limited resources and does not require baseline data | • Requires well-thought-through programme theory of change  
• Can overstate programme effect |
Used a **qualitative theory-based approach** to understand how change happened and the programme’s contribution to gender norm change.

**Focus groups and In-depth interviews** with 144 respondents with varying explore to the programme.

Respondents asked about *changes in their own lives*, what had caused those changes, and *influencing others* in their communities.

Study identified **profound personal changes** which were related to intensity of exposure to programme activities and a large proportion of young people diffusing their new knowledge, attitudes, behaviours. This confirmed the theory of change.
Single item questions

◆ On empirical and normative expectations
  ▪ “Most men in my community beat their wives” (EE)
  ▪ “Most men in my community expect me to beat my wife in certain situations” (NE)

◆ On individual behaviours and attitudes
  ▪ “I share childcare equally with my husband” (behaviour)
  ▪ “I believe my husband and I should share housework equally” (attitude)

Questions about actions

◆ On actions taken and readiness to change
  ▪ “I would intervene to prevent a man in my village beating his wife”

◆ On diffusion of new norms to others
  ▪ “I have discussed the harm caused by FGM with my family/peers”
Scales and indices

- Developed from **multiple question responses**
  - E.g. Perrin and Glass’s Gender Based Violence Scale
  - Global Early Adolescence Study Gender Norms Scale and Vignette based scale
  - CARE index for men’s use of aggression

Response options

- A move to **simplify options**
  - *Agree/ disagree*, rather than 4 point scales
  - “*Most/ some/ few/ none*”, rather than “How many of out ten people…?”
The Oxfam WE-Care Survey used vignettes to measure social and gender norms.

After hearing the vignette, the respondent is asked:
- Whether they personally approve (individual attitude),
- Whether people in their community would approve (social norm),
- How similar the situation described is to their own personal situation (personal behaviour).

My husband Brian works as a carpenter, he leaves the house early and comes back in the evening. After preparing breakfast for my family, I work in the field in the mornings. I return to prepare lunch for my children. I fetch water and firewood, make sure the house and compound are clean. When my husband comes back from work he is very tired. I bring him water to wash his hands and serve him food. I do the dishes and prepare the beds for all of us.
Routine Monitoring

Limited experience but **two approaches identified**:

1. **Activity monitoring** to confirm activities happen as planned, to record level of participation and **to observe behaviours**

2. **Monitoring of key performance indicators**, identified through the programme theory of change, and tracked using bespoke monitoring tools. **Common process indicators** on social norms change programmes include:
   - **Number of people participating** in interventions/being reached through communications activity
   - People’s recall of key messages
   - People’s knowledge of certain issues
   - People’s attitudes relating to certain issues
   - **Actions taken to encourage others to adopt a particular behaviour** (diffusion) e.g. discussing the issue with family and friends.
   - **Actions taken**, either individually or at the community level, **to enact a particular behaviour**, or prevent an undesirable behaviour
RECOMMENDATIONS
RECOMMENDATIONS 1 AND 2

1. Adopt a precise definition of social norms, emphasising social expectations, rewards and sanctions, to clarify what you need to measure.

2. Ensure adequate in-house capacity to manage and quality assure measurement of social norms, commissioning bespoke skills building training where necessary.
RECOMMENDATION 3

Design measurement strategies around a set of core social norm measures:

◆ Individual behaviour – *What I do*
◆ Individual attitudes – *What I believe I should do*
◆ Empirical expectations – *What I think others do*
◆ Normative expectations – *What I think others expect me to do*
◆ Rewards and sanctions
◆ Actions taken to promote or role model desired behaviours

If resources are limited, focus on individual behavior, normative expectations, and actions taken
For programmes that are small scale or where changing social norms is one among several objectives, adopt a ‘light touch’ approach:

- Include norm questions in existing surveys or monitoring tools
- Focus groups and in-depth interviews, using open questioning and vignettes
- To measure change over time, data collection at baseline and endline, as minimum
- Limit the number of norms tracked
For larger and longer-term programmes where changing social norms is a central focus, adopt a more comprehensive approach:

- Commission **specialist measurement partner**
- **Experimental or quasi-experimental survey design** with comparison group to understand programme effects
- **Quantitative and qualitative components** to understand what results and how they were achieved
- In-depth **formative research** to understand social norms in context
- **Design programme and results measurement approach in tandem**: one should inform the other
- **Possible to track several norms/sub-norms**
- Possibly use **scales or indices**
RECOMMENDATION 6

Make use of routine monitoring to track progress towards social norms change. Two possible approaches, not mutually exclusive:

1. **Activity monitoring** recording participants, frequency of events, and observing people’s behaviors

2. Identify **key performance indicators across the results chain** to social norm change and develop bespoke monitoring tools.