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

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

- 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

HEADLINE MESSAGES

◆ 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

DEFINITIONS OF
GENDER AND SOCIAL NORMS

The definition preferred by most experts is…

◆ 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*)*

THE CYCLE OF SOCIAL NORMS MEASUREMENT

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?
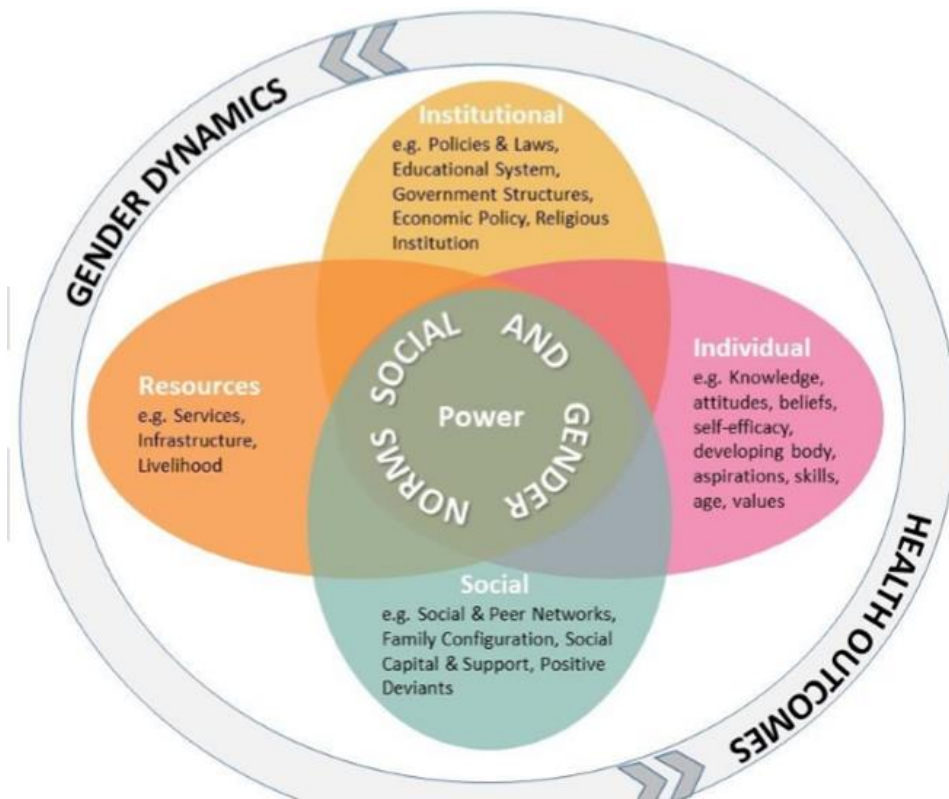
The flower for sustained health: an integrated framework for normative influence and change (Institute for Reproductive Health, 2019)

WHAT TO MEASURE

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

COMPONENTS OF A NORM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE RESPONSE
Empirical Expectations (EE)	What I think others do	*"Once you have got the chance, you have to marry. Your friends are getting married."*
Normative Expectations (NE)	What I think others expect me to do (what I should do according to others)	*"…everybody in the community expects adolescent girls…at the age of 13 to 15 years… to get married"*
Sanctions	Anticipated opinion or reaction of others (to the behavior) – specifically others whose opinions matter to me	*"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"*
Sensitivity to sanctions	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?	*Most girls would change their minds and marry after prolonged insults and isolation.*
Exceptions	Under what circumstances would it be okay for the main character to break the norm (by acting positively)?	*Girls can refuse marriage if they excel at school and their teachers convince their family to let them continue school.*

An Example

CARE's SNAP framework

IDENTIFYING AN APPROPRIATE APPROACH TO MEASURING SOCIAL NORMS CHANGE

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	Norm change is one of several outcomes – lighter 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	• 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

THE COMMUNITIES CARE EVALUATION: A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

- 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 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

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

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION APPROACHES

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
■ 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

A QUALITATIVE APPROACH: AN EXAMPLE FROM VOICES FOR CHANGE, NIGERIA

- ◆ 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.

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED…

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"

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS COMMONLY ASKED...

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…?"

USING VIGNETTES: AN EXAMPLE FROM OXFAM'S WE-CARE EVALUATION

◆ 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

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

RECOMMENDATION 4

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**

RECOMMENDATION 5

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**.