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Resources for Measuring Social Norms: A Practical Guide for Program Implementers

Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION 3
 - WHY IS THIS GUIDE NEEDED?3
 - WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE?.....4
 - HOW IS THIS GUIDE ORGANIZED?4
 - WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SOCIAL NORMS?5
- STEP 1: EXPLORE SOCIAL NORMS 7
 - REVIEWING EXISTING SECONDARY DATA ON SOCIAL NORMS7
 - COLLECTING FORMATIVE QUALITATIVE DATA ON SOCIAL NORMS8
- STEP 2: DEFINE AND ALIGN 15
 - DEVELOPING YOUR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PROGRAM THEORY OF CHANGE15
 - ALIGNING PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION WITH YOUR TOC17
- STEP 3: MEASURE..... 20
 - BASIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOCIAL NORMS MEASUREMENT20
 - DECIDING WHAT TO MEASURE.....20
 - SPECIFYING REFERENCE GROUPS22
 - ASKING ABOUT OUTCOME EXPECTATIONS33
 - DEVELOPING SOCIAL NORMS INDICATORS FOR MONITORING, LEARNING, AND EVALUATION34
 - PROS AND CONS OF VARIOUS MEASUREMENT APPROACHES36
- STEP 4: UNDERSTAND AND ACT 38
 - UNDERSTANDING YOUR DATA38
 - ACTING UPON YOUR FINDINGS42
- WORKS CITED 47

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND KEY PHRASES

AGIARP	Kenya Adolescent Girls Initiative Action Research Program
AYSRH	Adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FGD	Focus group discussion
GBV	Gender-based violence
GEMS	Gender Equitable Men Scale
IDI	In-depth interview
IRH	Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PVNS	Partner Violence Norms Scale
SNAP	Social Norms Analysis Plot
SNET	Social Norms Exploration Tool
TOC	Theory of change
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION	
What is covered here:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rationale for this guide• Audience for this guide• Content of this guide and how it was selected• Social norms terminology

WHY IS THIS GUIDE NEEDED?

Much global progress has been made in adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health (AYSRH) over the past two decades. Yet public health professionals and others are increasingly certain that further improvements in AYSRH cannot be achieved solely through standard approaches to change policy, increase financing, expand program delivery, and even improve educational outcomes. Rather, the critical, remaining barriers to improving AYSRH are often sociocultural, deeply tied to beliefs about the roles of, and behaviors appropriate for, adolescents and youth, girls and boys, young women and men in a given society.¹ The public health world has thus increasingly strived to design programs that identify and shift *social norms*: the rules—often informal, unspoken and unwritten—that govern which behaviors are appropriate within a given group.²⁻³ The push to address social norms has required a rethinking of how programs should be designed and implemented.

The past decade has seen a proliferation of programs that aim to shift social norms. Many of these norms-shifting programs are being taken to scale, often with very little evidence that they actually result in the intended shifts to social norms or to the behaviors related to those norms. This is due in part to deficits thus far in our ability to develop effective ways to measure social norms – including but not limited to how common a norm is among individuals, communities, and social groups; how strong or great an influence a norm has over individual behavior; and how norms change over time. In short, measurement of social norms has lagged behind the growth in programming for social norm change.

One reason for this delay is that measuring social norms is uniquely challenging.⁴ Measuring knowledge and behavior is comparatively straightforward: simple questions elicit a yes/no or correct/incorrect response. Social norms, by contrast, are intangible. They are invisible, typically unspoken and unwritten; we absorb them, uncritically, from the earliest age as ‘the way things are.’ Social norms are not defined by individuals alone but exist at a larger communal or societal level. To detect, measure and assess changes in social norms, researchers and programmers must understand many aspects of this intangible phenomenon: what they are, what behaviors are influenced by them, how common they are, how strong or influential they are under what conditions, who in a social group maintains them, and what are the rewards (or penalties) for following (or not following) them. In other words, measuring social norms is complex!

As this complexity implies, good social norms programming requires careful, thoughtful exploration and measurement. The Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change was established in January 2017 in part to address the gap between need for and availability of practical and actionable guidance for programmers. With funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and leadership from Georgetown University’s Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH), the Learning Collaborative serves as a platform for organizations and individuals to share and discuss emerging evidence, promising practices, and lessons learned in the realm of AYSRH norms-shifting interventions. The Learning Collaborative’s 300+ members represent 100 organizations and are organized into three communities of practice: Theory, Measurement, and Scale-up of Normative Interventions.

The goal of the Learning Collaborative’s Measurement Community is to enhance the ability of practitioners to measure social norms. We have pursued this goal via ongoing dialogue and by compiling and sharing social norms measurement tools that are now publicly available on the [Map of Social Norms-focused Projects and their Measurement Approaches](#).

Resources for Measuring Social Norms: A Practical Guide for Program Implementers is a complement to the Map of Social Norms-focused Projects. It is built from materials shared by Measurement Community members and other external organizations referred by members, including data collection tools, theories of change, and documentation of insights into the measurement of social norms and its implication for programming. This guide offers insight on and examples of: how to approach measuring social norms, when different approaches may be most useful, how to collect data based on accepted measurement approaches, and how to use the information gathered about social norms to inform programming.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE?

Resources for Measuring Social Norms: A Practical Guide for Program Implementers is intended for planners and implementers whose programs include norms-shifting interventions or who wish to better understand the social norms that affect the behaviors they seek to change.

While the focus of this guide is on the measurement of social norms writ large, the majority of examples and tools are from projects that focused on AYSRH. We expect that programmers in other sectors—education, livelihood security, governance and more—will find useful guidance here on how to develop and use good social norms measures.

This guide is not exhaustive, nor do we intend it to be prescriptive. Rather, we hope that it may serve as a practical, actionable resource for programmers throughout the program cycle.

HOW IS THIS GUIDE ORGANIZED?

The remaining four sections of this guide take the reader through a stepwise process to identify, select, adapt, and use a social norms measurement approach. We liken this to climbing a staircase (Figure 1) whose four levels, from lowest to highest, are 1) Explore; 2) Define and Align; 3) Measure; 4) and Understand and Act. In climbing the staircase, you ascend from a broad exploration of social norms to arrive at a much more refined and precise understanding of the social norms that prevail in your program area, and how your program can address them.

Which step should you start on? The answer depends on how much information you already have about the relevant social norms in your programmatic context, and on where you are in the project cycle.

- We suggest that, if you have only limited evidence about if and how norms are sustaining or preventing a given behavior, or if you are unsure which specific norms are important, you begin at the bottom of the staircase at [Step 1: Explore](#) with a process of norms exploration.

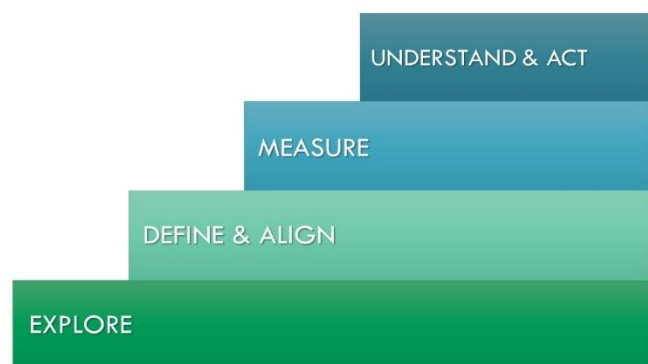


Figure 1: The “Staircase” of Social Norms Measurement; modified from Cislighi and Heise, 2016.⁵

- If or when you have a sense of the social norms most relevant to the behaviors your program is designed to address, and when you are ready to outline which norms and behaviors you wish to measure, [Step 2: Define and Align](#) will help ensure that you have accurately conceptualized the influence of norms on behaviors of interest, how your program will address those norms, and how you plan to measure the relevant norm(s).
- When you have a strong measurement plan, you are ready to craft your data collection instrument. In [Step 3: Measure](#), we provide considerations for selecting a measurement approach best suited to your programmatic needs, and examples of data collection tools that have taken these different approaches.
- Finally, once your data are collected, [Step 4: Understand and Act](#) provides tips and guidance on how to most efficiently understand the data, modify program strategies accordingly, and/or inform next steps including scale up.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SOCIAL NORMS?

Before we proceed to measuring social norms, it is important to establish common understanding of what we mean by social norms and to define a handful of key terms we will use throughout this guide.

In doing so, we begin with a clear understanding that *individuals live their lives not as individuals, but as members of communities and societies*. Figure 2 illustrates how individuals (and individual behavior) are shaped by social factors (including social norms) and by broader environmental factors. For example, a woman’s use (or non-use) of contraception is determined simultaneously by her individual preferences and characteristics, the social norms around contraceptive use in her household and her community, and the broader environment in which she lives, which determines factors such as the availability of contraceptive methods.

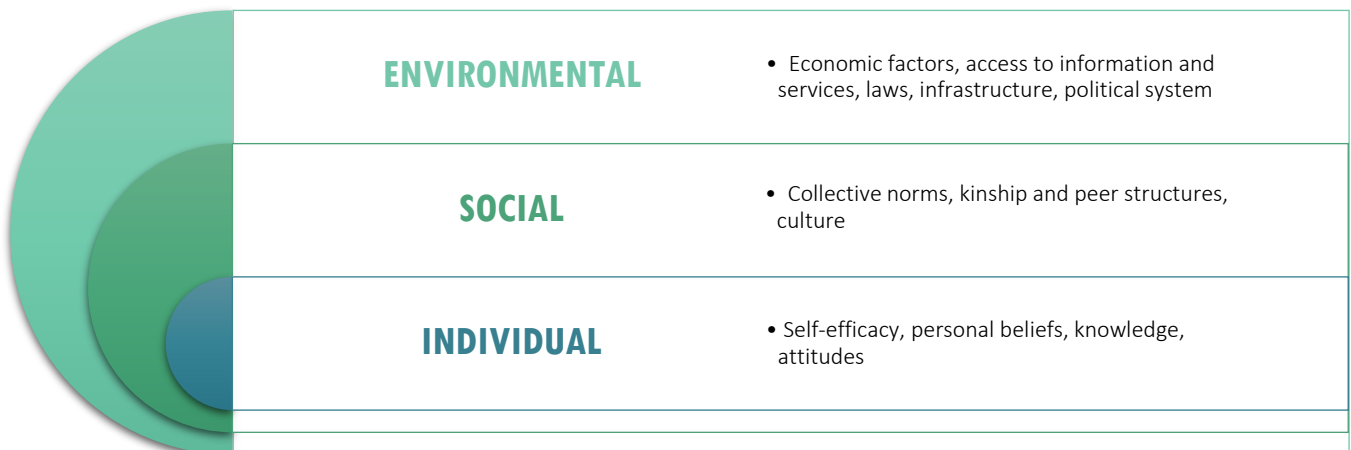


Figure 2: Ecological Framework; modified from Heise and Manji, 2015.⁶

Social norms are the beliefs about which behaviors are appropriate within a given social group. They are the rules that govern a behavior, and not the behavior itself. These rules are often informal, and typically unspoken and unwritten: people typically absorb, accept, and follow them without critical thought.²⁻⁴

In western culture, examples of behaviors driven by social norms are: forming a queue at a store counter, saying ‘*bless you*’ when someone sneezes, and holding open the door for a person entering a building after you. People

learn to do these things because they see other people do them, and they perform these behaviors, even if they personally find them unnecessary, because they want to play by the unwritten social rules.

Social norms can be divided into two types: the first is perceptions of *what people do* (**descriptive norm**), and the second is perceptions of *what people should do* (**injunctive norm**).² Some social norms practitioners refer to descriptive norms as *empirical expectations* and injunctive norms as *normative expectations*.³

Let us consider these two types from a slightly different angle. If you wish to know whether a person's behavior is influenced by social norms, you might ask the question 'Why do you do x behavior?'

- If the person responds, 'I do X behavior *because other people do it,*' they are expressing the influence of a descriptive social norm, or a perception of *what people typically do*.
- If the person responds, 'I do X behavior *because other people expect me to do it,*' they are expressing the influence of an injunctive social norm, or a *perception of what people should do*.

DESCRIPTIVE NORM EXAMPLE

Adam strikes his wife Ava because he perceives that many other men in his community/group also beat their wives. He perceives that the behavior is common (regardless of whether it is approved or disapproved of, and whether Adam thinks the behavior is right or wrong).

INJUNCTIVE NORM EXAMPLE

Newlyweds Adam and Ava hurry to get pregnant because they believe that others in their community expect them to bear children soon after marriage (regardless of whether Adam and Ava would prefer to wait).

Another important idea in the realm of social norms is the **reference group**, defined most simply as *the people whose opinion or behavior matters to me for a particular behavior or context*.³ A reference group may include individuals who enforce behaviors through rewards or punishment, or individuals after whom we model our own behavior.

The mention of rewards and punishment, above, brings us to the idea of **outcome expectations**. Often, individuals who behave in conformity to social norms expect to enjoy social rewards, such as approval and inclusion, whereas, those who deviate from social norms may face social punishment, such as ridicule or exclusion from the group.⁷ In other words, the power and influence of social norms arises in part from people's expectations of what may happen if they comply with or deviate from the norm in question. Typically, the more central a norm is to the identity of the group, the greater the social reward for compliance and the more severe the social punishment for non-compliance.

Finally, it is important to recall that, when looking at the levels of influence (*Figure 2, environmental, social, and individual*) on behavior, we are interested in measuring norms that exist at the level of community or society: these are known as **collective norms** because they exist in the collective.⁸ However, when we ask individuals to report on the existence of social norms in their community, what we are actually measuring are those individuals' *perceptions* of norms. **Perceived norms** therefore represent *an individual's interpretation of the prevailing collective norms*, both descriptive and injunctive.⁹ Throughout the rest of the document, we will be referring to perceived norms unless indicated as relating to collective norms.

STEP 1: EXPLORE SOCIAL NORMS

STEP 1 - EXPLORE	
When to use:	When you have little or no reliable evidence that social norms are affecting the behaviors that interest your program.
What is covered here:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to begin identifying what social norms may be influencing your behavior of interest, using secondary data, and collecting your own formative qualitative data• Examples of tools and approaches for conducting broad, exploratory research, providing general information for your program about whether, what, and how social norms influence your target behavior(s) and population(s)

When you begin to explore relevant social norms in your programming area, you won't yet have a formulated research question about social norms nor necessarily know whether and if so, what social norms are at play in your program context. We suggest therefore that you start with formative research. Formative research is designed to explore a topic rather than to answer a research question; it is usually done on a smaller scale than research seeking (for example) to measure program impact. Formative research often entails either, or both, seeking and evaluating secondary data (existing information on the topic of interest that was collected by another entity) and collecting primary data (information that you collect yourself).

During your initial exploration of social norms local field staff and members of the community are often intimately familiar with the social environment where they work and also may be important resources. However, just like anyone, they often do not have the full picture and see things mainly from their perspective. For example, talking to an elderly village headman about gender norms that shape the sexual behavior of adolescent girls will not provide you with a full picture of how those girls themselves define or perceive of how those social norms work. As a result, it is always advisable to do additional formative research to identify what the relevant norms may be.

REVIEWING EXISTING SECONDARY DATA ON SOCIAL NORMS

As a first step toward exploring social norms, it is logical to begin by reviewing existing literature and existing data on topics such as behaviors, attitudes, and/or social norms that your program may want to measure or monitor. Depending upon your timeline, resources, and budget, this review of secondary (existing) data can range from a rapid scan to a more organized and targeted process.

You may not find studies that measure social norms in your exact program context. However, you will likely find a number of datasets with useful information at a more aggregate level. For instance, the World Values Survey contains considerable data from more than 80 countries on cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs about gender, family, poverty, education, health, and security. [Demographic and Health Surveys \(DHS\)](#) provide nationally representative data on demographics and social and health behaviors. Other useful sources for secondary data are the [International Men and Gender Equality Survey](#) (IMAGES, carried out in more than 25 countries), and the [World Health Organization's Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women](#) (conducted in 10 countries). Each of these data sources provides useful information on men's and women's behaviors and attitudes as they relate to gender equality and roles, gender-based violence (GBV), health, and more. Other sources of secondary information about social norms may be news coverage, social media, popular entertainment, and laws and policies.

Bear in mind the limitations of large datasets when it comes to social norms information. They often do not account for reference groups (the people whose opinion or behavior matters to an individual for a particular behavior or context), and their focus is sometimes *too* aggregate (for example, national level patterns may not be particularly relevant to someone in an isolated community). They typically measure only individual behaviors and attitudes, rather than social norms (or, more specifically, individuals' perceptions of collective norms). However, aggregated information on individuals' behaviors can provide a proxy for exploring collective norms (the actual prevalence of behavior). That said, recall that what individuals perceive to be the norm may be quite different from what is actually happening at the aggregate level in terms of behavior. For example, individuals may perceive that expectations of girls' very early marriage are very strong, but at the national level fewer than half of girls marry at a very early age.

In one real-life example, a group of researchers wanted to estimate collective norms around contraceptive use among young women aged 15-24 in Ethiopia and Tanzania.¹⁰ They used the most recent DHS data from those two countries: because the DHS collects data from randomly selected households within given areas (called enumeration areas), the average number of people who are engaging in a particular behavior or who have particular characteristics in that area can be thought of as a representation of the collective norm. The researchers found their collective norm measure to be very related to whether individuals in those same areas were using contraception or not.

COLLECTING FORMATIVE QUALITATIVE DATA ON SOCIAL NORMS

While secondary data can be very useful for providing an idea of key social norms in your program area, it may be limited in availability and/or difficult to disaggregate (for example, it may be only available at the regional level, while you are working a smaller district). Because norms and behaviors are dynamic (can change over time) and highly dependent on the socio-cultural context, it is crucial that you also collect data directly from your program's target audiences during the exploration step. This process, commonly referred to as primary data collection, could help you to:

- Establish the presence of a norm for a given behavior in a given setting, even if limited in scope;
- Determine the locally appropriate vocabulary for talking to people about a specific norm;
- Determine if more than one social norm affects a behavior;
- Understand the strength of the norm(s) related to the behavior;
- Identify reference groups that are influential for the norm, and who is critical in shaping and enforcing norms; and
- Understand if social sanctions and rewards for compliance/non-compliance differ by setting.

In the exploration step, your primary data collection is likely to be qualitative in nature. This is because quantitative data collection is generally most effective when it is based on a solid understanding of the phenomenon being explored. Qualitative approaches are commonly used when there is little existing information on social norms for a given behavior and setting.

Qualitative methods, which include unstructured or semi-structured and participatory approaches, are well-suited to exploring the role of social norms in shaping behavior, as they allow individuals to define for themselves (with guidance from a trained facilitator) key features of norms and behaviors rather be limited by what outside implementers see as the key features.⁴ Furthermore, qualitative approaches allow for a much more nuanced exploration of social norms and their determinants than is possible with quantitative data, and the resulting information can then be used to shape more quantitative forms of data collection.

Qualitative data collection generally uses open-ended questions, typically in the context of focus group discussions (FGD) or in-depth individual interviews (IDI). Both can provide important information, but FGD are considered

better at getting general information on communities or groups, including social norms, whereas IDI are considered better at capturing individual experiences, attitudes, and beliefs. Used together, they can provide a full picture of the normative environment.

Table 1 shows open-ended questions that several real-life programs used in FGD and IDI. As you plan your own formative research, remember that questions:

- Designed to understand descriptive norms will focus on social expectations about what people in the community *do*;
- Designed to understand injunctive norms will focus on what people expect others in their community *should do* (which is not always the same as what people actually do);
- Designed to understand the reference group will focus on identifying the people or types of people whose opinions and behavior influence the respondent’s behavior; and
- Designed to explore outcome expectations will focus on how likely it is that complying or failing to comply with the expectations of a norm will result in social rewards or sanctions, and what those are.

TABLE 1: EXAMPLES OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS AND THE TYPES OF SOCIAL NORMS THAT THEY INFORM			
	OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS	CONTEXT	
DESCRIPTIVE NORMS	<i>In this community, when do most women in a relationship become pregnant (age, duration/status of relationship)? Is it ever scandalous to become pregnant in a relationship? Why? Probes: Not married, too young, unstable relationships?</i>	Used by:	Transform/PHARE Project (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Niger)
		Used in:	FGD with young women and men
		Used to understand social norms related to:	Family planning
INJUNCTIVE NORMS	<i>What do people in your faith community think about men’s use of violence against their wife? Probes: Do they think there are circumstances in which violence is acceptable? If yes, what are these circumstances?</i>	Used by:	Transforming Masculinities / Masculinité, Famille et Foi Project (DRC)
		Used in:	IDI with faith leaders
		Used to understand social norms related to:	Masculinity, gender roles, IPV, family planning
REFERENCE GROUPS	<i>Who do you talk to about menstruation? Probes: Who in your family? Who among your peers? What about teachers? Health workers? Whose advice is most important on whether you use sanitary products?</i>	Used by:	Garima Project (India)
		Used in:	FGD with adolescent girls
		Used to understand social norms related to:	Menstruation
OUTCOME EXPECTATIONS	<i>Do you know boys your age in your area who are not yet married? Why do you think they are not yet married? Probes: What are the benefits of being married at your age? What would community members think of an unmarried boy your age?</i>	Used by:	Preventing Early Marriage in Poor Urban Settlements Project (Bangladesh)
		Used in:	IDI with young, married men
		Used to understand social norms related to:	Early marriage

Qualitative research methods such as FGD and IDI can be made more effective by combining them with interactive and participatory techniques. For example, participants in FGD and IDI can be asked to rank, map, or respond to vignettes over the course of the FDG or IDI. This is particularly true when working with youth or populations with low literacy levels. The goal of these exercises is to directly engage participants and break down the perceived divide between the ‘researcher’ and the ‘research participants’. For example, a researcher could ask a group about a pre-determined list of norms, OR a research could ask FGD members to brainstorm their own list, then rank the norms by their importance to a particular behavior. Table 2 shows more examples of participatory approaches that have been used successfully by projects to explore social norms.

Participatory approaches have many advantages over more structured approaches, especially during early research. They offer a direct, less biased means for you to learn about social norms from community members, and they are well suited to exploring the complexity of social norms. Participatory techniques are also enjoyable, easy for participants to understand, and allow their greater ownership of the research process.

TABLE 2: PARTICIPATORY TECHNIQUES AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR THEIR USE			
TECHNIQUE	WHAT IT IS	CONSIDERATIONS FOR USE	SOURCE
Body mapping	A form of storytelling in which the body map —the outline of a person's body— provides a structure for participants to visually depict both the internal and external influences on their lives.	Can provide a way to discuss norms around sensitive matters in AYSRH as participants are reporting on a more abstract outline rather than their own bodies.	Garima Project tools from India
Pile Sorting & Ranking	Participants are asked to sort and/or rank cards, containing a word or a picture, into piles that makes most sense to the participant and are more similar to each other than they are to items in separate piles.	Need some knowledge of the words or pictures that would most resonate with and reflect social norms to study participants.	Momentum Project tools from the DRC
Social Network & Influence Mapping	Participants draw links between themselves and significant others in their lives.	Helps in figuring out which individuals and reference groups hold what level of influence over another individual or group.	Tanora Mitsinjo Taranaka Project tools from Madagascar
2X2 social norms tables	Participants fill in two tables—one for approval, one for behavior—to describe individual- and community-level approval and practice of a given behavior.	Easy to complete tables and in so doing explore descriptive norms, injunctive norms, and outcome expectancies. Allows individuals to see how groups behave the same or differently from others and similarities and differences between approval and behavior.	Participatory Research Toolkit RainBarrel Communications

		Provides an opportunity to probe on the role that sanctions and rewards play in perpetuating social norms.	
Vignettes	Vignettes are short stories about imaginary characters in specific contexts, with guiding questions that invite participants to respond to the story in a structured way. They are often presented to individual during in-depth interviews, or to homogenous groups in focus group discussions, to understand the perspectives of specific groups.	Can stand alone or be embedded in other data collection tools. Can be used qualitatively, allowing for purely open-ended responses, or responses can be categorized. Allow participants to offer their views about a third person (rather than about themselves) in a specific (rather than in an abstract) context.	Global Early Adolescent Study tools from DRC Abdiboru, Tesfa, ReNEW tools from Ethiopia and Sri Lanka Girls Holistic Development tools from Senegal

Although valuable, participatory exercises can also be a challenge to implement. They require strong facilitation skills and good knowledge of the large range of techniques. It can seem overwhelming to choose exercises and to tailor them to the populations, outcomes, or norms that your program wishes to address. Some implementers may find it easier to use ‘packages’ of tools and exercises to explore social norms, such as Oxfam’s Social Norms Diagnostic Tool, IRH/Passages’ Social Norms Exploration Tool (SNET), and CARE’s Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP) framework. Each of these packages can be easily adapted to a variety of settings and populations.

Social Norms Diagnostic Tool

The Oxfam Social Norms Diagnostic Tool is a set of exercises to help programmers identify and discuss social norms, perceptions, and expectations with community members. Note that Oxfam developed the tool for its economic development programming: it therefore focuses specifically on social norms, perceptions, and expectations that shape, constrain, or promote young women’s economic empowerment and participation in economic development initiatives. Oxfam designed the Social Norms Diagnostic Tool for use in a one- to three-day workshop (depending on the number of social norms of interest), that is facilitated and attended by community members, including young men and women. The tool provides guidance on participatory techniques and processes to identify social norms surrounding gender, gender roles, marriage, reproduction, gender-based violence, perceptions of normative change, and influences on norms.

One exercise in the Social Norms Diagnostic Tool identifies social norms surrounding gendered work roles. Participants are asked to think about someone in their community who is a ‘good’ woman or a ‘good’ girl, then to list the tasks that she is expected to perform. Next, an FGD elicits additional information about how social norms define what is a ‘good’ woman or girl. The goal is to understand how the label of ‘good’ is related to the work roles that women are expected to play (and that they are not). The columns in Table 3 represent a rubric that appears to uncover useful insights about social norms that could be adapted to a variety of behaviors. Adaptation, of course, would require a careful process of developing the right exercises and questions that are suited to the norm and behavior of interest. For a full description of the Oxfam Social Norms Diagnostic approach, see: <http://wee.oxfam.org/profiles/blogs/diagnostic-tool-on-social-norms-tested-in-bangladesh>.

TABLE 3: EXAMPLE FROM OXFAM'S SOCIAL NORMS DIAGNOSTIC TOOL APPLIED TO GENDERED WORK ROLES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

TASKS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS TASK?	WHAT ROLE WOULD THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TASK PLAY IN THE HOUSEHOLD?	CHANGE WITH AGE/MARRIAGE/MOTHERHOOD?	WHY?	WHO SAYS?	BENEFITS / CONSEQUENCES
Meal preparation	G, W	M, w	No change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It's a woman's job - Women do it better - Women are better at listening - Women can't go away from the house too often 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural tradition, songs, roles during funerals or weddings - Religious leaders and texts - Community leaders - Textbooks in schools - Parents, aunts, grandparents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - B: praise from husband - B: will feel proud she is a good mother - C: wives may be beaten if don't do tasks well - C: the community calls her lazy if not doing tasks
Firewood collection	G, W	D, w	Girls start at age 13			
Water collection	G	D	Women stop doing at marriage			
Caring for the sick	G, W	D, M, w	Increased role upon motherhood			
Moral support	W	M, w	Increased role upon marriage			

* G- girls, W- women / D-daughter, M-mother, w-wife / B- benefits, C-consequences

** Modified from Oxfam Social Norms Diagnostic Tool, <http://wee.oxfam.org/profiles/blogs/diagnostic-tool-on-social-norms-tested-in-bangladesh>

Social Norms Exploration Tool (SNET)

IRH developed a similar tool, titled the SNET, as part of the Passages Project. The SNET is a participatory, learning and action approach whose practical and cost-effective exercises can help program planners and implementers quickly develop a preliminary understanding of the social norms in a given setting. IRH originally created the guide and toolkit to address SRH and family planning outcomes among young couples, but it can be adapted to other behaviors. Since it was first developed, the SNET has undergone further testing, refinements, and revisions across multiple settings and behaviors.

The SNET guides users to gather information about: (a) the most relevant social norms affecting behaviors of interest in a specific setting and (b) the groups or individuals who influence those behaviors (reference groups). It presents an organized process that users can follow to set objectives, train staff, select and develop tools from a range of participatory exercises (see Table 4), conduct data collection, analyze the data, and report findings. The SNET envisions a rapid process of social norms exploration that, depending on the number of social norms and populations addressed, can take as few as eight days. For a full description of the IRH SNET approach, see: <http://irh.org/social-norms-exploration/>.

TABLE 4: EXPLORATORY TECHNIQUES FROM SNET			
#	EXERCISE	METHOD TYPE	PURPOSE
Exploration Round 1 – Conduct this round with the project’s populations of interest, learn the reference groups for populations practicing a specific behavior.			
1	<i>My social networks</i>	Rapid listing	Explore which people are influential (part of a person’s reference group) by providing guidance, information, advice, or support on a specific issue.
Exploration Round 2 – Conduct this round with project populations of interest and their reference groups, learn which norms are most influential vis-à-vis a behavior of interest.			
1	<i>The five whys</i>	Participatory group analysis and diagramming of social causes of ‘why does X behavior exist’	Explore the social norms that influence the behavior(s) of interest, learn which may be most influential, and understand the extent that descriptive and injunctive norms are influencing behaviors and consequences (sanctions) of not following a norm.
2	<i>Problem tree analysis</i>	Participatory group diagramming, discussion, and analysis of root factors	Same as the 5 ‘Whys.’ PLUS: This exercise identifies both social and non-social causes of behaviors.
3	<i>Vignettes</i>	Participatory group discussions of open-ended stories	Same as the 5 ‘Whys.’ PLUS: Can reveal more context and nuanced analysis with good probing

* Modified from IRH SNET, <http://irh.org/social-norms-exploration/>

Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP) Framework

CARE developed the SNAP Framework (see Table 5) to identify key components of a particular norm, to understand its influence on behavior(s) of interest, and to measure if and how the norm is changing. The SNAP was originally designed as part of a qualitative exercise that used vignettes to frame discussions of norms and behaviors; we include it here because we consider it especially useful during the Explore step. That said, SNAP can be used at several junctures: to identify norms ([Step 1: Explore](#)), understand how these might respond to particular program interventions you are considering ([Step 2: Define and Align](#)), or to develop and refine the qualitative and/or quantitative measures you’ll use to measure norms and assess change ([Step 3: Measure](#)).

The SNAP framework builds on the basic components of norms discussed in the Introduction, and considers additional components that might influence behavior: specifically, how strong a norm is, how flexible or rigid it is (including when exceptions to conformity are allowed). The SNAP framework gathers information on:

- What behavior is considered typical or usual in the group you are interested in?
- What behavior is considered to be approved of in that group?
- If someone behaves in a way that breaks the norm, what social punishment is expected?
- How much do the expected social sanctions for breaking the norm influence how people behave?
- Is it acceptable for some people (or all people at some times) to behave in a way that is not typical or not approved in the group?

SNAP can detect norms shifts by comparing how people discuss the components of norms over time. For example, are there signs of disagreement with social norms, either descriptive, injunctive, or both? Are the social sanctions for deviation weakening over time? As an analysis framework, SNAP can be used for various measurement methods, but has been used mostly for qualitative vignettes. In CARE’s experience, a small team

can design vignettes, train researchers, and pilot vignettes in one week. For a full description of the CARE SNAP Framework, see:

http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/applying_social_norms_theory_to_practice_cares_journey.pdf.

TABLE 5: EXAMPLE FROM CARE'S SNAP FRAMEWORK APPLIED TO INTERVENTION ADDRESSING SOCIAL NORMS RELATED TO EARLY MARRIAGE FOR GIRLS		
COMPONENTS OF A SOCIAL NORM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE RESPONSE
Empirical Expectations (another term for descriptive norms)	What I think others do	<i>"Once you have got the chance, you have to marry. Your friends are getting married."</i>
Normative expectations (another term for injunctive norms)	What I think others expect me to do (what I should do according to others)	<i>"...everybody in the community expects adolescent girls...at the age of 13-15 years...to get married."</i>
Sanctions (another term for outcome expectations)	Anticipated opinion or reaction of others (to the behavior) – specifically others whose opinion matters to me (this is similar to what is referred to above as the Reference Group)	<i>"If a girl is not married at age of 15 years, many adolescent girls in the community would insult her saying 'haftu,' which means the one who is not needed."</i>
Sensitivity to sanctions	Do sanctions matter for behavior? If others react negatively, would the main character change their behavior in the future?	<i>"Most girls would change their minds and marry after prolonged insults and isolation."</i>
Exceptions	Under what circumstances would it be okay for the main character to break the norm (by acting positively*)?	<i>"Girls can refuse marriage if they excel at school and their teachers convince their family to let them continue school."</i>

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* Modified from CARE SNAP, http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/applying_social_norms_theory_to_practice_cares_journey.pdf

* By 'acting positively', we mean that a harmful norm is broken in a way that is beneficial in terms of the behavioral outcome of interest and is not harmful in other ways (such as disadvantaging someone else or stigmatizing behavior).

STEP 2: DEFINE AND ALIGN

STEP 2- DEFINE AND ALIGN	
When to use:	If you do not have a conceptual framework or theory of change for your program, or if the framework you have does not account for social norms.
What is covered here:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define your conceptual framework and program theory of change for your program • Make sure your program monitoring, evaluation and learning goals align with the conceptual framework and theory of change • Use conceptual frameworks and theories of change to help develop indicators or measures for social norms

DEVELOPING YOUR CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND PROGRAM THEORY OF CHANGE

A fundamental first step for all programs is the development of a clear understanding of how your program will seek to achieve its long-term goals. This typically involves several steps, beginning at a ‘big-picture’ conceptual level and then becoming more and more detailed as the details of the programmatic approach become clearer. This process is especially important for programs that aim to shift norms or that need to account for the effect of norms on behavior because of the complexity that is inherent in social processes and the close linkages between norms and other socio-cultural factors.

Many implementers will have already gone through a process of developing the key components of this process, which often include a conceptual framework, a program theory of change (TOC) and a logic model/logical framework. In many cases, developing these models of how your program will simply mean taking program processes that you and your team intuitively understand and making them explicit by developing a formal model describing your program and how it will achieve its goals. However, taking the time to develop these frameworks is worth doing for several reasons.

What are the benefits of conceptual frameworks and a TOC? Programs and evaluation plans that are grounded in a conceptual framework and an explicit, consensus-driven TOC are more likely to:

- Have a clear, common understanding of a program, its goals, and the mechanisms through which change will occur;
- Have developed common language to discuss a program;
- Have better implementation planning; and
- Be able to make changes to the program based on new information, be effectively adapted in new settings, and to have measurement and evaluation systems that support program implementation.¹¹

Finally, and most importantly for this guide, a conceptual framework and program TOC will form the basis for the decisions you make about study design and measurement tools, improve the rigor and usefulness of the data you collect, and help you identify focus areas for both research and programming.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is, essentially, a theoretical road map that, in diagram or narrative form, defines a phenomenon as a series of concepts, constructs, or variables and describes the hypothesized relationships between them.¹¹ A conceptual framework takes a ‘big-picture’ perspective, and its goal is to describe the major factors that influence the behavior that your program is trying to change.

A conceptual framework is not meant to be a perfect description of a phenomenon. Instead, selecting a conceptual framework will help you define your program’s perspective, and the relationships between factors of interest. It is important to remember that your program is not required to address all of the levels or relationships shown in a conceptual framework. It may focus only on several, specific factor(s) and relationship(s) included in the framework.

If your program is not already based on a conceptual framework, then it is worth developing one. The first step is to review what is already known from research or programming about the behavior you are interested in changing and the social and cultural context that your program is/will be working in. Examine other conceptual frameworks and see how well they align with what you know about the context you are working in. This process should be collaborative – sit with your colleagues and other important stakeholders in the project, including members of the communities where your project will operate and work together to develop your own framework or to modify an existing one. Remember that many conceptual frameworks about social norms already exist: you do not need to develop one from scratch. This is also a good opportunity to see how well your program elements align with the pieces of the conceptual framework – if they don’t align well, it is unlikely that your program achieves its goals as it will most likely not address the important factors that drive the behavior you are interested in.

Figure 2 in the Introduction is an example of a conceptual framework: it illustrates the ‘social ecology’ in which individual behaviors exist. Its authors, Heise and Manji, posit that behaviors are influenced by an individual’s knowledge, skills, and agency; which exist within the society, relationships, and social norms that surround her; which in turn exist within an environment whose multiple facets include and are not limited to law, religion, government, and economy.⁶ While this appears to be a simple model, it represents well the complex ways in which the individual, social, and environmental levels of ecology interact to influence an individual’s choice of behaviors (or even her awareness that she has a choice)

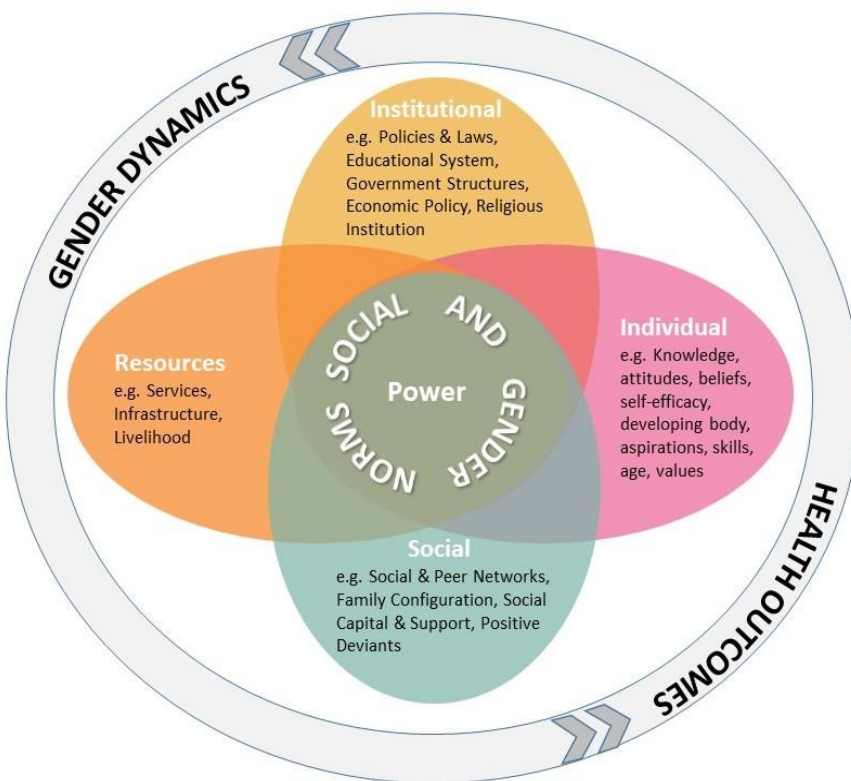


Figure 3. *The Flower for Sustained Health: An integrated socio-ecological framework for normative influence and change. Modified from Cislaghi and Heise (2017) by the Learning Collaborative.*

Figure 3 is another example of a conceptual framework. Developed by the Learning Collaborative, it builds on and refines the Heise and Manji framework (Figure 2), and represents the idea of the social ecology in a different way.¹² Here we can easily see that the power an individual has is shaped by the overlap of institutional, individual and social factors and resources, which in turn shapes gender dynamics and health outcomes. This framework, too, appears simple, but effectively shows the many complex interactions and processes involved in achieving health outcomes.

Theory of Change (TOC)

A TOC is a practical programming tool that lays out, step by step, a programmer's understanding of how and why an intervention produces intended outcomes, and the pre-conditions necessary for it to do so, within a specific context.¹¹ A TOC is often informed by a conceptual framework that defines theoretical concepts and directional relationships between them. A TOC, however, is less 'big-picture' and more focused on the details of how a program will achieve its goals.

A TOC typically includes a sequence of logically-linked events leading to change. For example, an intervention to reduce child marriage may aim to change norms by increasing knowledge, among parents of girls in a particular community, of the harm child marriage can do to girls. This increased knowledge is assumed to change parents' attitudes towards child marriage; this change in attitude encourages parents to challenge the norm and allow their daughters to remain unmarried. When a sufficiently large proportion of parents change their behavior, the norm in the community can be seen to have changed. The TOC shows this sequence of steps in greater detail than the simplified version here, along with key contextual factors that shape the behavior and any assumptions that the program is making about the causal linkages described.

It is important that you develop the TOC in close partnership with the full implementation team and other important stakeholders, as it lays out in more detail the logic of how change will happen. Developing your TOC provides an opportunity for stakeholders to express their assumptions about the problem being addressed, and about the changes that will take place. It will prompt reflection on the evidence behind each assumption of change and highlight evidence gaps still to be filled. Your TOC may help you identify potential blockages or risky pathways that need to be managed, the possible impact of those risks, and alternative change pathways that could act as contingencies. Further, your TOC may identify important phenomena that your project alone cannot address but that could be addressed in collaboration with others.

A study-specific measurement approach should be grounded in your conceptual framework and project-specific TOC.¹¹ Your TOC can identify variables to measure and the hypothesized relationships with your outcome of interest. Linking measurement of these constructs (i.e. what questions you will use) with your conceptual framework and TOC will increase the likelihood that the research accurately assesses your program and that the results can be used to advance program efforts. This is even more the case for the logic model (also referred to as a Logic Framework), which takes the TOC one step further in terms of detail, linking project inputs to specific activities, outputs of those activities and the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes that together lead to the larger impact that the program aims to have. Both the TOC and logic model provide a solid framework from which to draw measures of change and provide an important 'reality check' for program designers by forcing them to clearly present each step along the pathway from program activity to actual outcomes.

In the context of programming and research on social norms, the TOC and logic model are especially important, as both require: 1. A clear identification of the particular norms that influence a behavior; 2. To show how this influence is thought to work (directly or by influencing other behaviors); and 3. To show how the program seeks to change the norm and therefore influence the behavioral outcome. This complexity makes developing the TOC and/or logic models difficult, but has significant benefits both in helping improve program strategies and when the time comes to measure the norm, behavioral outcomes and the effect of the program.

ALIGNING PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION WITH YOUR TOC

Program staff and someone with research training should jointly review the primary and secondary data collected in [Step 1: Explore](#), the conceptual framework, and the program TOC as a prerequisite to creating an appropriate and useful measurement approach. Grounding your measurement approach in a broadly accepted conceptual

framework ensures that you are building on existing evidence and helps to situate your analysis and findings within a wider body of knowledge.

Your aim is to align or link the measurement and evaluation approach with the program TOC, building on existing program experience and learning needs. For example, a TOC defines what a program is doing, what it hopes to achieve, and the pathway by which it will achieve its goals. Certain elements of change mechanisms may already be clearly identified and supported by data. Others may be less clear: you may want to give priority to measuring and learning about those components that would benefit from additional data. For example, if an area of interest in your evaluation will be to understand whether social norms are shifting, you should give consideration to which norms are related to outcomes of interest, which reference groups hold those norms in place, and how the program is achieving diffusion to facilitate and sustain normative shifts. Finally, ensuring that program implementers and stakeholders share an understanding of the conceptual framework and TOC increases the odds that social norms measurement will meet program needs and encourage buy-in from all partners throughout the project.

Case Example: Adolescent Girls Initiative Action Research Program

The Kenya Adolescent Girls Initiative Action Research Program (AGIARP) was a randomized, controlled trial conducted by Population Council that tested combinations of initiatives—in health, violence prevention, wealth creation, and education—to determine which combination or package improved adolescent girls' lives most.¹³ As an initial step, AGIARP practitioners developed a TOC (see Figure 4) to guide their evaluation of the different packages.

The AGIARP TOC was translated into a measurement approach by ensuring that the evaluation tools were aligned with the constructs specified in the TOC. The theorized relationships between the intervention (column at left), the mediating factors (middle column), and outcomes (column at right) were specified with directional arrows. Based on social norms exploration, AGIARP practitioners hypothesized that social norms were influential for two of the hypothesized mediating factors—social assets at the individual level (i.e. adolescent girl participants) and perceptions of community norms relating to the value of girls at the household level. Measures were developed for social norms at each of these levels (as well as other non-normative elements of the TOC) and incorporated in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) indicators as part of the measurement approach. Data were collected from indicators at baseline and endline, and were checked against the TOC to see if there were changes over the life of the program and to confirm that the hypothesized causal chains were operating as anticipated. These data were used to better understand if social norms were shifting due to intervention packages, which packages were leading to the most significant shifts in social norms, how normative change interacted with other mediating factors, and if shifts in social norms were leading to behavior change and achievement of intervention objectives.

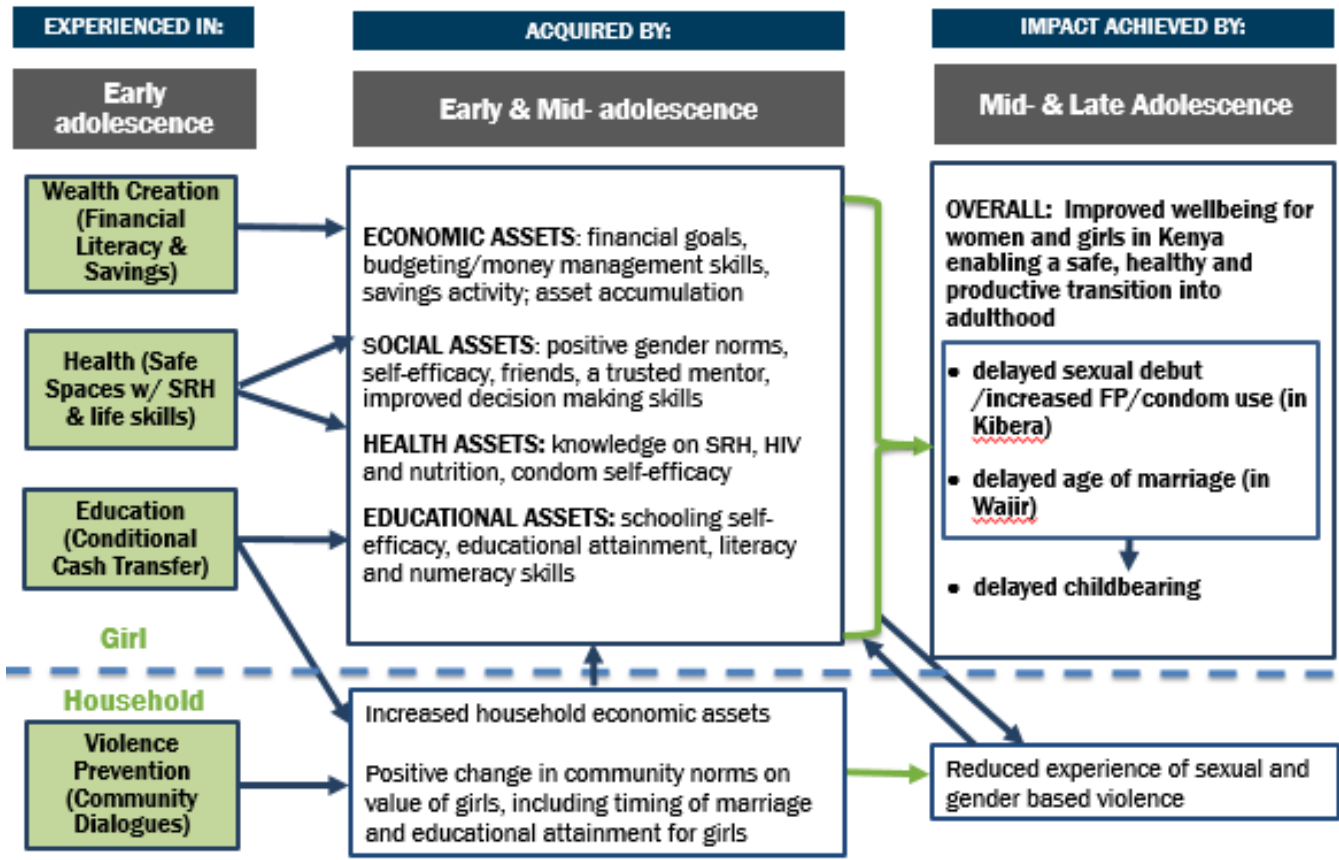


Figure 4: AGIARP TOC.¹³

STEP 3: MEASURE

STEP 3- MEASURE	
When to use:	After you have defined your measurement needs or research questions and aligned them with your program’s TOC, you are ready to operationalize your measurement plan—in other words, it is time to develop your questionnaire or data collection instrument. Ideally you have also already been able to collect or identify some data to inform norms that are at play in your program context.
What is covered here:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deciding what to measure• Approaches to specifying reference groups• Quantitative social norms measurement approaches• Asking about outcome expectations• Pros and cons of various measurement approaches

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOCIAL NORMS MEASUREMENT

As discussed in the Introduction, measuring social norms is a challenging and complex process. Because norms are based on social processes and structures, measuring them often requires multiple questions about several aspects of a given norm and/or behavior. This section provides basic guidance on how to measure core aspects of social norms, using examples drawn from the experience of Learning Community members and their networks. We encourage you to consult our interactive [Map of Social Norms-focused Projects and their Measurement Approaches](#), where you can search by key terms and find all tools that Learning Collaborative members submitted and compiled by the Measurement Community for this activity.

As noted in the Introduction, we focus here on quantitative approaches to the measurement of norms. This should not be taken to mean that qualitative approaches cannot provide important information on social norms (as demonstrated in [Step 1: Explore](#)); rather, it reflects what we feel might be of most immediate use to implementers. In practice, we strongly advocate that qualitative and quantitative approaches be used together, as they complement each other well.

It is important to note that the comprehensive measurement of social norms requires significant financial and time resources, expertise in understanding norms, and expertise in data collection and analyses. *A full-scale attempt to measure norms will therefore be challenging within the scope of many programs.* In those cases, we suggest that programs use the approaches described in [Step 1: Explore](#), as these can provide valuable information on norms that can be used to inform programming and aid in interpreting the effect of your program on behavioral outcomes. We also provide guidance and practical examples that can make social norms measurement more accessible and feasible at further steps.

DECIDING WHAT TO MEASURE

It is especially important that attempts to measure social norms be based on a carefully thought out conceptual framework and TOC, as described in [Step 2: Define and Align](#), and on the types of secondary or primary data analyses described in [Step 1: Explore](#). Completing those steps will help you identify the norms that are most relevant to the behavioral outcome of interest to your program. In addition, the following considerations may be useful to keep in mind when selecting which norms to measure.

1. **The likelihood that multiple norms have bearing on your behavior(s) of interest.** When we think of a behavior, we often assume that the social norm that corresponds *most directly* to the behavior is the one with the greatest effect on whether we can change that behavior. For instance, if the behavior of interest is contraceptive use among adolescent girls, we will ask about social norms directly related to contraceptive use among adolescent girls. In reality, however, a more *indirect* norm may have a greater impact. To continue the example, an indirect norm may be that adolescent girls should not discuss sex (nor should adults discuss sex with them). Shifts in this norm may have to occur first for the greatest impact on contraceptive use among adolescent girls.
2. **Norms related to your behavior(s) of interest can be harmful, protective, or both.** Measurement often focuses on a harmful norm that needs to be shifted, but this may mean we neglect to identify and support protective norms that could be instrumental in bringing about desired behavior change. For example, we might be so focused on trying to end child marriage that we fail to see a protective norm related to girl's ability to complete their schooling that, if supported, could result in greater behavior change than could be produced by a narrow focus on marriage age.
3. Among the direct, indirect, harmful and protective norms that may be at play in your program context, **not all norms are equally strong.** We can assess the strength of a norm by measuring outcome expectations (people's expectations of the social consequences of complying with or deviating from the norm in question). Measures of outcome expectations can determine the presence of negative or positive consequences (sanctions or rewards) that follow from complying—or not—with a social norm. The strength of a norm may be a useful indicator of how amenable to change that norm is. It may indicate unintended harms that project participants could experience (and that programs should therefore try to prevent).
4. Social norms are not the only factors that drive behavior, including behaviors linked to your outcomes of interest. You saw this when you explored norms, selected a conceptual framework, and created a TOC. **Norms are almost always embedded in a system of structural drivers that intersect and sustain behavior(s),¹²** as Figures 2 and 3 illustrate. As such, do not make the mistake of measuring only norms. You will have to make decisions about what other factors to measure, at the structural and individual levels.
5. **Norms do not change overnight.** Plan to measure at several time points, even as you measure other constructs that may be precursors to normative shifts and/or that may provide insight into why the desired behavior change is or is not occurring. For instance...
6. **Norms can be aligned or misaligned with attitudes.³⁻⁴** Individual attitudes may be positively correlated (aligned), negatively correlated (misaligned), or possibly even uncorrelated with the social norm depending on the individual and the norm.
7. Reference groups are the people whose opinion matters to a person or group in the context of a particular behavior. They are the primary group to which individuals turn for guidance on the social 'rules' for a given behavior. **Norms are typically sustained by more than one reference group, and the reference groups' influence may have different weight or even go in different directions.** Consider, for example, adolescent boys who are whether or not to become sexually active. Their peers, who are primary reference group, may strongly influence them to experiment with sexual activity. Their parents, another important reference group but one whose influence lessens as the boys age, may discourage experimentation.

8. Identifying power holders in the community is useful, because **power holders may resist or support change**. By power holders, we mean the reference groups or individuals within reference groups who have the greatest influence on your behavior of interest.¹² Some of these individuals may be powerful allies in championing norm change, and others may resist—especially if at least part of their power is tied to enforcement of the norm.

SPECIFYING REFERENCE GROUPS

Because of the importance of reference groups, it is essential that you specify the reference group(s) to which each of your social norms questions refers. This process sometimes called ‘bounding’ (or identifying a reference group). Note that asking questions about behaviors or beliefs *without asking about the reference group* will result in a measure of an individual’s attitude or personal belief, and not of a social norm.⁴

The tools introduced in [Step 1: Explore](#) help you begin to identify groups of people within the community who influence the behavior(s) of interest to your program. Following this early identification, you should determine which of these groups is most important to include in your social norms measures, and how best to specify these reference groups within your questions (such as by age, gender, profession, stage of life, type of support or relationship, residential location, etc.) so that they are easily identifiable.

Being specific in your data collection tool is important: if you ask about reference groups that are too general or not well aligned to your target audience, you may focus your program on the wrong reference groups, and thereby reduce the effectiveness of your work. For example, if you wish to understand social norms related to contraception and you ask youth about their perceptions of contraceptive use by *community members*, your question encompasses too wide a range of people and a meaningful social norm cannot be described. Many *community members* do not use contraceptives; even if they did, your program is unlikely to have enough resources to work with all community members.

Also important, individuals are often members of several reference groups (for example, as a young mother *and* as a member of a religious community), and may hold different, even contrasting, normative beliefs from one group to another. For instance, youth may perceive approval of pre-marital sex among peers in their school community, but disapproval of pre-marital sex among members of their religious community.

The Learning Collaborative’s Measurement Community reviewed tools and ascertained that most programs use measures with generalized reference groups such as peers or community members. Rarely did we find strong documentation of how these reference groups were chosen based on context-specific evidence. As suggested above, the data gathered in [Step 1: Explore](#) will help you to identify the reference groups for norms that exist in your program’s setting. If, however, you need to measure social norms without the benefit of formative data, or with formative data that indicated a large number of reference groups, approaches are available to help you narrow your reference groups to those most relevant to your project objectives. Below are three such approaches that can be used to specify reference groups.

Enumerating Egocentric Reference Groups

The goal of the [Tékponon Jikuagou Project](#) was to increase family planning use in in Benin. In their project evaluation, IRH researchers used a social network approach known as egocentric enumeration to define and identify reference groups. Respondents (referred to as ‘egos’) were asked to name (‘enumerate’) the people in their social network who provided them either material assistance or practical assistance (Box 1 below contains a slightly modified description of how this was done). Tékponon Jikuagou hypothesized that these two types of people would be the reference groups most likely to influence an individual’s behaviors or beliefs.

After identifying these people and recording their names in a network grid, respondents were asked whether they believed each individual approved or disapproved of family planning use (injunctive norm). In contrast to using pre-specified reference groups, the egocentric enumeration allows for pinpointing *exactly* who influences respondents' perceptions of descriptive and injunctive norms, from their own perspectives.

BOX 1: COMPLETING THE EGOCENTRIC ENUMERATION NETWORK GRID

1. Read *"Now we are going to talk about the people in your network – people who you interact with, people you receive support from, people you consider to be part of your world. People you mention can live in this village or elsewhere."*

2. **Material network grid**

Ask *"Think of the people who provide you **material assistance**. For example, someone who loans you money, someone who buys things for you in the market, or someone who gives you food or clothes. Please tell me the names of all the people that you go to for this type of support."* For each person named, write ONLY the FIRST NAME in the Name column.

Then ask *"Who else do you go to for this type of support?"* Write all names mentioned by the respondent. If you run out of space on the page, use a supplemental page.

3. **Practical network grid**

Ask *"Think of the people who provide you **practical assistance**. For example, they help you take care of your children, or they can help with household chores, or they can help you with trading or agriculture." Please tell me the names of all the people that you go to for this type of support."* For each person named, write ONLY the FIRST NAME in the Name column.

Then ask *"Who else do you go to for this type of support?"* Write all names mentioned by the respondent. If you run out of space on the page, use a supplemental page

4. For each person on each of the two grids, ask the following question:

Ask *"What is your relationship with (first name of the person)? You can mention more than one kind of relationship. For example, this person can be your aunt and your health provider at the same time."*

* Modified from [Tékonon Jikuagou Project](#) tools submitted to the Learning Collaborative

Comparing Egocentric to Broader Community Reference Groups

When the RAND Corporation wanted to specify reference groups in the [Palestinian Youth Health Risk Behavior Study](#), it chose an approach that was more than using pre-specified groups, and less than a full egocentric enumeration. In their survey, enumerators asked respondents about their perceptions of social norms, then about actual behaviors for a subset of reference group members most likely to be influential to the respondent.

As shown in the simplified tool below, one set of questions asked respondents to assess what proportion of *all* young men in their area participated in certain behaviors. The second set of questions asked them to quantify how many of their *three closest friends* engaged in the behaviors. In both sets, the researchers were measuring youth perceptions of descriptive norms, but captured how youth were influenced differently by two potentially quite different reference groups. Because the questionnaire previously asked about the respondents' own

behaviors, the researchers were also able to understand how respondents’ individual behavior aligned with or differed from their perceptions of how their close friends and youth in the broader community behaved.

TABLE 6: EXCERPT FROM PALESTINIAN YOUTH HEALTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY DEMONSTRATING APPROACH TO IDENTIFYING BROADER COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUPS	
NO.	QUESTIONS AND FILTERS
Now I’d like to get your perceptions of the behaviors of your peers, that is male youth your age who live in [WHERE RESPONDENT LIVES]. I’d like you to think of <i>all</i> such people here, not just your own friends or people you know well....	
1	What percent of male youth your age living in this area do you think are employed? (FOR THIS AND THE FOLLOWING: ASK FOR BEST GUESS IF RESP. SAYS DOES NOT KNOW OR HAS NO ANSWER.)
2	What percent of male youth your age living in this area do you think are tobacco smokers?
3	What percent of male youth your age living in this area do you think take alcohol?
4	What percent of male youth your age living in this area do you think use drugs? I mean drugs such as hashish or marijuana, or pills, or drugs that are injected.
5	What percent of male youth your age in this area WHO ARE NOT MARRIED do you think are having sexual relations, that is sexual intercourse? Just to be clear, I am referring to putting the penis in the vagina.
Now I’d like to ask you specifically about the behaviors of people who are close to you. I mean those your own age and sex who you spend your time with, such as your good friends. I’d like you to think of the THREE people you are closest to. I don’t want to know their names, just for you to keep them in your head as I ask the questions.	
6	First, how many of these three are married?
7	How many of these three individuals are tobacco smokers?
8	How many take alcohol?
9	How many use drugs?
10	You told me that ___ of these three people are married. Of the <i>other</i> ___, how many are having sexual relations? WRITE THE NUMBER MARRIED AND NOT MARRIED WHERE INDICATED

* Modified from [Palestinian Youth Health Risk Behavior](#) tools submitted to the Learning Collaborative

Determining the Relative Influence of Reference Groups

In its work to end child marriage, [UNICEF in the Middle East and Northern Africa](#) developed a tool to determine the reference group of individuals who influence a parent’s decisions to arrange (or not) a daughter’s marriage, and how influential individual members of the reference group are. A modified version of the tool appears in Table 7 below. We include the tool in this guide because it allows the user to distinguish not only the types of people who influence certain norms, but also who among these is most influential.

The tools first set of questions use egocentric enumeration to elicit the names of up to ten people whom the respondent talks to about when to marry children, and the respondent’s relationship with each of these individuals. Then, unlike other egocentric enumeration tools, the UNICEF tool’s second set of questions discerns how influential each person is in the respondent’s life. The final questions, shown below, assesses the respondent’s perception of each influencers’ preferences for early marriage. When responses from both sets of questions are combined, a program has valuable information about which types of influencers might be most likely to support delayed (or early) marriage, and which are most influential among the program’s target audience. A program can thus tailor its interventions specifically to these groups and/or conduct additional measurement of attitudes and behaviors among this group.

TABLE 7: EXCERPT FROM UNICEF MENARO SURVEY DEMONSTRATING APPROACH TO DETERMINING THE RELATIVE INFLUENCE OF REFERENCE GROUPS

Is there anyone you talk to in order to get their opinion or advice about when to marry your children?	Yes No Refuse to answer		If yes-> go to Q. 30.1 If no-> go to Q. 31										
Who are these people in relation to you? <i>Ask for and list the names of each person the respondent would talk to. Then, starting with the first name, ask the person's status or role to the respondent (e.g. mother, friend, religious leader, etc.).</i>	#	Name		Relation to respondent									
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. His/Her Mother 2. His/Her Father 3. His/Her Brother 4. His/Her Sister 5. His/Her Neighbor 6. His/Her Uncle 7. His/Her Aunt 8. His/Her Father-in-Law 9. His/Her Mother-in-Law 10. Other(specify) 	1			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	2			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	3			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	4			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	5			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	6			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	7			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	8			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	9			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	10			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	#	A lot	A little	Not at all	Unsure/ Don't know			Refuse to answer					
How much does the opinion of (name each person listed above) influence your decision on when to marry your children?	1												
	2												
	3												
	4												
	5												
	6												
	7												
	8												
	9												
	10												
	#	A lot	A little	Not at all	Unsure/ Don't know			Refuse to answer					
Do you think that (name each person listed above) thinks you should marry your daughters/female household members before she turns 18?	1												
	2												
	3												
	4												
	5												
	6												
	7												
	8												
	9												
	10												

* Modified from [UNICEF MENARO Project](#) tools submitted to the Learning Collaborative

Measuring Social Norms Quantitatively

In the terminology discussion in this guide’s [Introduction](#), we explained that when we ask individuals to report on the existence of social norms in their community, what we are measuring are those individuals’ perceptions of norms. **Perceived norms** represent *an individual’s interpretation of prevailing collective norms*, both descriptive and injunctive. Perceived norms are important because people act based on their perceptions—or their misperceptions.

Many tools and formats exist to help you quantify perceived norms, including single-item measures, indices, scales and vignettes (when used in the context of a quantitative questionnaire). We review these below.

Single-Item Measures

The simplest and most common measures of perceived norms are survey items that ask about one perceived norm in relation to one assumed reference group at a time. We call these ‘single-item measures.’

Table 8 below contains some examples of single-item measures from tools gathered by the Learning Collaborative. Each measure specifies a reference group within the question (shown in Table 8 as *italicized text*). All questions offered several response options on a Likert scale¹ to distinguish estimates of prevalence, and all asked about different behaviors (shown in the examples in Table 8 as underlined text). The bold type in the last column emphasizes that injunctive norms assess attitudes rather than the behaviors themselves.

TABLE 8: EXAMPLES OF SINGLE-ITEM SOCIAL NORMS QUESTIONS		
BEHAVIOR/ OUTCOME OF INTEREST	DESCRIPTIVE NORM	INJUNCTIVE NORM
Family Planning	How many <i>women in your community</i> do you think do the following: <u>practice abstinence; use amulets, grisgris or the withdrawal method; use LAM, postpartum amenorrhea, or the rhythm method; use condoms; use pills, morning after pills, or injectables; use implants, IUDs, or sterilization?</u> (Pathfinder, ReSolve Project Survey)	<i>People in my village</i> would think a young wife who <u>uses a family planning method</u> to delay or space births was not fulfilling her duty to her family (Reaching Married Adolescents Survey)
Child Marriage	Most <i>adolescent girls in my community</i> <u>marry before the age of 18 years.</u> (ODI, GAGE Survey)	<i>Adults in my community</i> expect adolescent girls to get <u>married before the age of 18 years.</u> (GAGE Survey)
Early pregnancy	Can you please tell me how many <i>girls in your community</i> around the age of 16 are <u>pregnant or have given birth to a child?</u> (IRH, Girls Holistic Development Survey)	<i>People in my village</i> expect a young wife to <u>start having children very soon after getting married,</u> regardless of her age. (Reaching Married Adolescents Survey)

¹ In a Likert scale, respondents are asked to rate their attitudes or opinions on a topic using response categories such as Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

Below we highlight two additional tools in Table 9 and 10 that we felt provided good examples of clearly worded single-item social norms measures with clear reference groups. We chose to bring attention to these two tools because they used a series of single-item measures to bring greater precision to estimates of how common the norms of interest are.

Correspondence of individual behaviors and attitudes with perceived norms

In addition to measuring the social norm itself, be sure to measure the individual behavior (or behaviors) that you are assuming is influenced by either the descriptive norm or the injunctive norm. This is for quite obvious reasons: the interest in norms is as a driver of the behavior that the program seeks to change, so understanding how closely linked they are is of great importance. You will likely also want to measure individual attitudes related to the norm. Quantifying the extent to which individuals’ behaviors and attitudes align with or oppose perceived norms can provide additional insight for the design and evaluation of norms-shifting interventions. For instance, there may be a high reported prevalence of a social norm *against* a certain behavior, but individuals still report a high rate of engaging in the behavior. This apparent misalignment can be examined in a number of ways, as the following examples show.

Directly comparing self-reports to perceived norms

In the [GARIMA Project](#) in Nepal, Drexel University’s evaluation tool used single-item measures to capture girls’ perceptions of norms surrounding menstruation. Table 9 shows a simplified version of the GARIMA measurement tool. An innovative aspect of the GARIMA tools is that it linked questions about the respondent’s self-reported behaviors and attitudes to each question about perceived norms. This allowed for direct comparison between individual’s perceptions of descriptive and injunctive social norms and their personal behavior and attitude.

Also notable was that this tool not only provided simple, dichotomous (yes/no) response options to the questions, but it allowed respondents to provide an open-ended explanation of why their behavior or attitude may differ from other girls in their village. This additional detail and context may have been useful to enhance understanding if the program did not see intended effects as implementation proceeded.

TABLE 9: EXCERPT FROM GARIMA EVALUATION TOOL DEMONSTRATING APPROACH TO COMPARING SELF-REPORTS TO PERCEIVED NORMS			
QUESTIONS	CODING CATEGORIES		GO TO
Injunctive & Descriptive Norms (Approval & Disapproval)			
I want to understand the levels of approval or disapproval. Can you tell me to what extent you and other girls like you in your village approve or disapprove of the following.			
i.1.A.i Do you approve or disapprove of using sanitary pads? (Individual Attitude)	Yes, I approve	1	
	No, I don’t approve	2	
i.1.A.ii Do other girls in your village approve or disapprove of using sanitary pads? (Perceptions of injunctive social norm)	Yes, they approve	1	
	No, they don’t approve	2	
i.1.B.i Do you use sanitary pads? (Personal (or self-report) behavior)	Yes	1	
	No	2	
i.1.B.ii Do other girls in your village use sanitary pads? (Perceptions of descriptive social norm)	Yes	1	
i.1.C You mentioned that you _____ and/ but other girls in your village _____. Can you tell me the reason for your answer?	Recorded in handout		

* Modified from [Garima Project](#) tools submitted to the Learning Collaborative

Estimating how common specific behaviors are in communities

Another innovative approach to measuring perceived social norms was taken by the World Bank in its evaluation of [MTV's Shuga Series](#) in Nigeria. Single-item measures sought respondents' perceptions of the prevalence of a descriptive norm in their community. But to attain greater confidence in the accuracy of these perceptions, the World Bank also asked respondents two additional questions as "estimation exercises".

As shown in the simplified version in Table 10, respondents were first asked to estimate the prevalence of the descriptive norm in the community, then to give a more specific quantification of the prevalence within a smaller subset of the population, and finally to rate how sure they felt about their prevalence estimations. Collecting responses as numbers meant that results could be analyzed as continuous rather than categorical variables. This approach could be useful in instances where a program is concerned with obtaining more precise estimates of the prevalence of a norm. There may be a variety of reasons that programs would want to attain greater specificity with their measures of norms; for example, if a program is interested in demonstrating changes in norms over time.

TABLE 10: EXCERPT FROM MTV SHUGA EVALUATION SURVEY DEMONSTRATING APPROACH TO ESTIMATION OF PERCEIVED NORM PREVALENCE	
If you consider other women of your age living in your COMMUNITY, how many are in relationships where they are beaten or physically hurt by their husbands or boyfriends? <i>READ OPTIONS</i>	MANY....SOME....VERY FEW....NONE1.....2.....3.....4.....
Out of 20 women of your age living in your COMMUNITY, how many are in relationships where they are beaten or physically hurt by their husbands or boyfriends?	_ _
Are you sure or unsure about this chance? <i>READ OPTIONS</i>	VERY SURE....SURE....UNSURE....VERY UNSURE1.....2.....3.....4.....
If you consider other women of your age living in your COMMUNITY, how many are in relationships where they are forced to have sex by their husbands or boyfriends? <i>READ OPTIONS</i>	MANY....SOME....VERY FEW....NONE1.....2.....3.....4.....
Out of 20 women of your age living in your COMMUNITY, how many are in relationships where they are forced to have sex by their husbands or boyfriends?	_ _
Are you sure or unsure about this chance? <i>READ OPTIONS</i>	VERY SURE....SURE....UNSURE....VERY UNSURE1.....2.....3.....4.....

* Modified from [MTV Shuga Project](#) tools submitted to the Learning Collaborative

Indices or Scales

Indices and scales both use multiple questions to create a single measure for a phenomenon that is not directly measurable with a single question or test. Usually these phenomena are referred to as 'constructs,' in part because they are constructed from multiple aspects; some examples are social norms, self-efficacy, or mental health. An index generally sums the values of the response to the questions to create a 'score' (a very simple index might count the number of 'yes' responses to a series of yes/no questions). A scale is constructed from multiple questions that use the same Likert-scale responses and questions are combined using statistical techniques

(typically a form of factor analysis). For both indices and scales, it is important to begin with a clear idea of the theoretical constructs that you are trying to measure and their probable relationships with one another—draw these from your conceptual model or TOC—before you design your questions or analyze data.

To date, there no consensus on the minimum number of single-item measures needed to effectively measure the presence of a perceived social norm. Many social norm theorists and researchers argue for the need to measure, at a minimum, both descriptive norms and injunctive norms, and outcome expectations.³⁻⁴ Even so, it stands to reason that when measuring complex concepts such as social norms, you will need more than one measure or indicator to address one concept, and that you will be challenged to interpret all those indicators as one concept.¹⁴

Multi-item scales are the most widely used measures in questionnaires. They provide quantitative measures that lead to more precision, more ease in statistical analysis, and improved interpretive processes. Furthermore, by using previously tested scales, researchers ensure validity and reliability. Few validated scales of social norms exist, and of the tools that the Learning Collaborative gathered and reviewed, few were scales. Fortunately, some progress is underway in creating and validating social norms scales related to gendered and AYSRH behaviors.¹⁵⁻¹⁶ Lest you be tempted to modify an existing, validated scale to a norms-shifting intervention, be aware that modifying any existing scale, such as removing or adding questions, may change the way that the scale works and what it eventually measures. We recommend that you do not make any changes unless you are prepared to rigorously test the performance of the scale (including a full set of tests for validity and reliability).

Adapting scales from individual level to community level

A widely-known and validated scale for measuring gender attitudes is the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale.¹⁷ This scale is sometimes referred to as a gender norms scale, but it is important to keep in mind that to the extent that the questions in this scale ask about individual attitudes (and not about attitudes within a broader community), these are not *social* norms. We have included in this toolkit, however, an adaptation of the GEM Scale to measure social norms.

As part of their evaluation of the [Community Empowerment Program \(CEP\)](#) in Senegal, researchers at PATH modified a subset of GEM Scale items to ask respondents not only if they personally agreed with the statement about gender, but also how many people in the community they thought would agree with the statement (i.e. a community gender norms scale). PATH also tested various response category possibilities before deciding to use “no one”, “a few”, “many” and “everyone” for those questions in the Senegal context. Over time, they saw improvements in female respondents’ responses to certain GEM Scale items and to the Community Gender Norms Scale items (i.e. decreased support for certain inequitable gender norms). Users of the of Community-Level Gender Norms questions should validate the response categories for their local context, as language nuances relating to approximate quantifications can lead to varying interpretation by respondents.

TABLE 11: EXCERPT FROM TOSTAN EVALUATION SURVEY DEMONSTRATING APPROACH TO ADAPTING AN EXISTING SCALE FROM INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL TO COMMUNITY-LEVEL

MODIFIED GEM SCALE ITEMS (MEASURING INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES TOWARD GENDER NORMS)		COMMUNITY-LEVEL GENDER NORMS SCALE (C-GEM) USED IN THE TOSTAN EVALUATION (MEASURING SOCIAL INJUNCTIVE GENDER NORMS)
Response options (1 = agree, 2 = partially agree, 3 = disagree)		Response options (0 = no one, 1 = a few, 2 = many, 3 = everyone)
a.	A woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and cook for her family.	How many people in your community would agree that the most important role of a woman is to take care of her home and cook for her family?
b.	A woman should obey her husband in all things.	How many people in your community would agree that a woman should obey her husband in all things?
c.	A man should be outraged if his wife asks him to use a condom.	How many people in your community would agree that a man should be outraged if his wife asks him to use a condom.
d.	A man using violence against his wife is a private matter that shouldn’t be discussed outside the couple.	How many people in your community would agree that a man using violence against his wife is a private matter that shouldn’t be discussed outside the couple?
e.	There are times a woman deserves to be beaten.	How many people in your community would agree that there are times a woman deserves to be beaten?
f.	When women get rights, they are taking rights away from men.	How many people in your community would agree that when women get rights, they are taking rights away from men?
g.	Men need more sex than women do.	How many people in your community would agree that men need more sex than women do?

* Modified from [Community Empowerment Program \(CEP\)](#) tools submitted to the Learning Collaborative

If you wish to use the GEM scale in your work, please check to see if a validated version for your country already exists: (<https://www.c-changeprogram.org/content/gender-scales-compendium/gem.html>).

Developing new community-level scales

The [Change Starts at Home Project](#) in Nepal worked to change social norms to prevent intimate partner violence. Researchers from the Rollin School of Public Health used findings from a literature review and formative research to develop the Partner Violence Norms Scale (PVNS) to examine relevant injunctive norms. They piloted the PVNS prior to implementation.

As shown in Box 2, participants were asked not about their own beliefs, but about their perceptions of how many members of their community believed each statement. Although additional psychometric testing is needed before conclusive statements can be made about the utility and replicability (validity and reliability) of the PVNS, analyses of survey results suggest higher scores on the PVNS were strongly associated with reporting of more physical and sexual violence. This suggests that it holds promise as a useful scale measure of social norms associated with intimate partner violence.

BOX 2: PARTNER VIOLENCE NORMS SCALE USED BY [CHANGE STARTS AT HOME PROJECT](#)

	Everyone in my community believes this	Most people in my community believe this	Some people in my community believe this	No one in my community believes this
A husband who helps his wife with the household chores will not be respected by his family. [read out the response options]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A man who makes important decisions jointly with his wife will be considered a weak man by his family.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A man's family will think he is a disloyal son if he takes his wife's opinion over his mother's opinion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A woman who openly expresses her sexual desires to her husband is perceived to be vulgar.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Husbands may use force to reprimand their wives because men should be in control of their families.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A woman who complains about her husband's violent behavior is considered a disloyal wife by her in-laws.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A woman who does not tolerate violence from her husband is dishonoring her family and should not be welcomed home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A person who intervenes when a woman is being beaten by her husband would be considered to be interfering or meddling in the couple's private affairs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

* Modified from [Change Starts at Home Project](#) tools submitted to the Learning Collaborative

Vignettes and Vignette Experiments

Vignettes, as defined in [Section 2: Define and Align](#), are becoming increasingly common as both a qualitative and quantitative approach to measure social norms. A vignette can be communicated to respondents in many ways (as a story told by a data collector, or displayed in a computer program, or through videos, photos, or songs), and is followed by a facilitated discussion or by a series of quantitative questions (as described below).³ It is important that vignettes present participants with familiar and easily understood scenarios, and that they are piloted with the target population to ensure comprehension and relatability. No firm rules exist about the length or complexity of a vignette, but when used in quantitative studies, vignettes that are simple, relatable, and precise (that is, they provide sufficient detail that participants have little or no opportunity to 'fill in' missing information, thereby coloring their responses) work best for measuring norms and their impact on behavior.

Vignettes can be used as a purely qualitative participatory tool as was shown in [Section 1: Explore](#), or response categories can be developed and presented to vignette participants such that vignettes become a quantitative measurement approach. Vignettes have several advantages over traditional survey questions:

- First, because vignettes are representations of subjects or situations that should be familiar or relatable to the respondents, the questions asked afterwards are linked to a concrete, realistic context. Thus, vignette-based questions and responses may be more realistic and less abstract than conventional survey questions.
- Second, vignette data can be analyzed in multiple ways, such as comparing how different aspects of the responses to particular segments of the vignette relate to each other.
- Finally, vignettes are very flexible, and can be used in different formats and for different purposes.

Conducting Vignette Experiments

As a quantitative tool, vignettes can also be used in what are termed vignette experiments. In vignette experiments, respondents are randomly assigned to different versions, or “manipulations” of the vignette in order to test the effect of these variations on respondent’s answers to a uniform set of questions capturing individual attitudes or injunctive norms.

Table 12 below draws from tools from a [study of HIV Risk Program in central Uganda](#). Researchers from American University wanted to uncover gender norms associated with transactional sex. To do so, they used vignette experiments to test whether social approval (injunctive norms) for men’s sexual decision-making power and authority in relationships was stronger in manipulations where the man provided more; and if social approval for women having a second partner was weaker in manipulations where her primary partner provided less. Researchers randomly assigned respondents to receive one of two versions of three stories that differed (or were manipulated) by the amount the man provides to his partner in the story. In all versions, the characters and situations were tailored so that adolescent girls found them relevant and believable.

TABLE 12: EXCERPT FROM EXPERIMENTAL VIGNETTES USED TO EXAMINE SOCIAL NORMS ASSOCIATED WITH MALE PROVISION IN CENTRAL UGANDA	
Male provision and authority in relationships (Vignette A)	
Cate and Paul have been in a relationship for three months. Cate is 17 and in school and Paul is 20 and working.	
<i>Manipulation 1:</i>	----
<i>Manipulation 2:</i>	<i>Paul has been providing Cate with clothes and money to buy things that are important to her.</i>
Last week, Cate went out to have fun with a group of her friends without Paul. Paul learned about it, and then told Cate she should never go out with her friends without his permission.	
Male provision and sexual decision-making power (Vignette B)	
John and Sarah have been in a relationship for some time.	
<i>Manipulation 1:</i>	<i>He has been providing Sarah with a little money for her to buy clothes, and airtime.</i>
<i>Manipulation 2:</i>	<i>He has been providing Sarah with things important to her; he has given her a smart phone and gives her any money she says she needs.</i>
Last week, he asked to have sex with her for the first time, but she said she no. John becomes angry with her.	
Women’s engagement with multiple partners for male provision (Vignette C)	
Stella and Stephen are in school together and have been together for over a year. They love each other.	
<i>Manipulation 1:</i>	<i>Stephen is only able to sometimes buy snacks for Stella.</i>
<i>Manipulation 2:</i>	<i>Stephen has been giving her money in addition to buying her snack every day.</i>
Yet, Stella needs (more) money in order to be able to buy trendy clothes so she can fit in with her friends, so she found a second boyfriend to support her.	

* Modified from [central Uganda HIV Risk Study](#) tools submitted to the Learning Collaborative

ASKING ABOUT OUTCOME EXPECTATIONS

Most of the tools that the Measurement Community reviewed for this guide measured perceived norms, which provide information about the *prevalence* of descriptive and injunctive norms. Less common was a corresponding measure of the norms’ strength or influence on a given behavior. Yet measures of norm strength or influence are important because, even if an individual believes a given behavior is prevalent, or that approval or disapproval of the behavior is prevalent, he or she may still not do the behavior if the norm exerts only a weak influence.

For example, a social norm against premarital sexual activity may be prevalent in a community, but the behavior remains common because there are no strong social consequences. By asking questions about the likelihood of experiencing consequences, positive or negative, as a result of following or not following a social norm, we can gain insight into the norm’s strength. In the case of strong social norms that seem as if they would be difficult to change, questions about sensitivities to sanctions and exceptions to norms may reveal unique circumstances under which we are more likely to be able to achieve desired change.

Identifying and Measuring Social Sanctions

In its evaluation of the International Center for Research on Women’s [PARIVARTAN Project](#) that promoted gender equality in India, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine used single-item questions to measure expectations about the likelihood of experiencing negative sanctions as a result of not adhering to specific social norms. In the example shown in Table 13, researchers asked about consequences that would accrue to girls if they moved about in public spaces and played sports.

TABLE 13: EXAMPLE SOCIAL SANCTIONS QUESTIONS FROM PARIVARTAN EVALUATION TOOL	
CONSEQUENCES FOR DEPARTING FROM SOCIAL NORMS	
<i>If you are given more freedom to move about in public spaces and play sport, how likely is it that the following consequences might occur? There is no right or wrong answer</i>	VERY LIKELY.....1 SOMEWHAT LIKELY.....2 NOT LIKELY.....3
A. You will be teased and harassed by local boys or men	
B. You may encounter more arguments/conflicts with your parents	
C. You may find it more difficult to get married	
D. You may be considered uppity and disobedient	

* Modified from [PARIVARTAN Project](#) tools submitted to the Learning Collaborative

Assessing Sensitivity to Sanctions and Exceptions

Not everyone will be similarly influenced by the rewards or sanctions linked to complying or not complying with a particular norm. If a person is very sensitive to the rewards or sanctions, their behavior is more likely to be influenced by the norm.

CARE’s [Abdiboru Project](#) in Ethiopia addressed social norms as one type of structural determinant that hindered adolescent girls’ empowerment. To assess social norms, researchers presented a vignette to a focus group of adolescent girls (the vignette told the story of Halima), then asked several questions about descriptive and injunctive norms surrounding girls and schooling. Next, the researchers presented a surprise story ending, designed to assess participants’ outcome expectations if Halima were to choose not to comply with the norms implied in the vignette. Specifically, the surprise ending elicited information not only about the sanctions that Halima might face, but also about Halima’s sensitivity to the sanctions and about what conditions might constitute exceptions to the norms. Table 14 shows a subsection of the vignette from the Abdiboru Project.

A more nuanced understanding of how sanctions work, and if there are exceptions to when social norms are enforced, may be useful for programs trying to shift norms that have particularly strong sanctions associated with them. If, for example, respondents were to indicate that Halima might be able to continue school if she had money for school books, this might constitute a specific exception to the norm that a program would want to further research and possibly leverage to shift norms.

TABLE 14: SAMPLE VIGNETTE FROM THE ABDIBORU PROJECT IN ETHIOPIA	
PART 1	
<i>Halima [age 15] is a grade 8 student. After completing grade 8, her parents indicate that Halima has no need to continue school as she has enough education for a girl to lead a life. They say that she must help the family and that she can find some job with her current educational level. Her father orders that she is not going to school any more. (background)</i>	
PART 2	OUTCOME EXPECTATIONS QUESTIONS
<i>Halima decides to go against her parents' wishes and continues going to school. (non-compliance with norm)</i>	c. What would Halima's parents do/say to their daughter in this situation? Would the reaction of the father and mother be different? (sanctions) d. Would Halima continue to go to school if it was not for the reaction of her parents? (sensitivity to sanctions) e. Under what conditions would Halima be able to continue school? (exceptions)

* Modified from [Abdiboru Project](#) tools submitted to the Learning Collaborative

DEVELOPING SOCIAL NORMS INDICATORS FOR MONITORING, LEARNING, AND EVALUATION

To date, many AYSRH programs have monitored individuals' behaviors, attitudes, and self-efficacy. Developing and using M&E indicators for perceptions of social norms are a relatively new phenomenon. Although creating high quality M&E indicators can be quite different from creating a survey instrument, many of the same principles apply. As with a survey, you want to carefully select your indicators to ensure they are aligned with your program's TOC and are streamlined to capture the norms and reference groups that are most likely to be salient to your program objectives.

A simple but effective way to develop social norm indicators is to use the same format as a single-item survey question: measure an individual's perceptions of how much others approve of or disapprove of a behavior, and/or an individual's perceptions of how common a behavior is. Be as specific as possible with the reference group and behavior: this will make it easier to interpret the findings and decide what, if any, action your program should take. You could also track changes in scale scores as a way of detecting trends, but recall that you must validate the scale and be confident that it is a reliable measure.

The Measurement Community found very few existing monitoring indicators as we gathered tools for the Learning Collaborative. Among the few, UNICEF's guide [Measuring Social and Behavioral Drivers of Child Protection Issues](#) contains some useful lists of indicators and some useful guidance on developing social norms monitoring indicators.¹⁸ The guide explains that UNICEF staff in the Middle East/Northern Africa developed a topic-agnostic conceptual framework for behavior that was intended to capture all elements influencing behaviors, including but not exclusively social ones. The conceptual framework spawned several monitoring tools and surveys, designed for practicality and easy implementation by field staff at baseline, mid-term or endline evaluations.

The related UNICEF monitoring toolkit focuses on three topics: female genital mutilation and cutting, child marriage, and child discipline. The toolkit contains lists of indicators for a number of pre-selected social and behavioral change drivers, and quantitative surveys based on the finalized list of indicators. In the guide, UNICEF describes how the indicators were generated and prioritized, using a consultative process, and explain how each question was mapped against its corresponding indicator(s) and against the conceptual driver it was designed to inform, creating a ‘questions bank’ for future reference.

TABLE 15: EXCERPT FROM UNICEF MENARO’S INDICATORS OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE OUTLINED FOR THE CHILD MARRIAGE TOPIC AREA	
Social influence - normative expectations (<i>another term for injunctive norms</i>) (approved behaviors)	% of respondents who think that people in their community disapprove of child marriage
Social influence - normative expectations (<i>another term for injunctive norms</i>) (approved behaviors)	% of respondents who think that more than half/the majority of the people in their (define group) expect them to marry their daughters/female household members and boys/male household members before 18
Social influence - empirical expectations (<i>another term for descriptive norms</i>) (believed typical practices)	% of respondents who think that adolescent girls expect their peers to marry before 18
Social influence - empirical expectations (<i>another term for descriptive norms</i>) (believed typical practices)	% of the respondents who believe that all/most individuals in their community are marrying their children before 18
Social influence - empirical expectations (<i>another term for descriptive norms</i>) (believed typical practices)	% of respondents who believe that dowry is uncommon (or decreasing) in their community
Social influence - empirical expectations (<i>another term for descriptive norms</i>) (believed typical practices)	% of respondents who believe that bride wealth is uncommon (or decreasing) in their community
Social influence - social pressure (rewards, sanctions, sensitivity, exceptions) (<i>another term for outcome expectations</i>)	% of respondents who can identify benefits (rewards) associated with child marriage abandonment
Social influence - social pressure (rewards, sanctions, sensitivity, exceptions) (<i>another term for outcome expectations</i>)	% of respondents who can identify sanctions (punishments) associated with child marriage abandonment
Social influence - social pressure (rewards, sanctions, sensitivity, exceptions) (<i>another term for outcome expectations</i>)	% of respondents who are willing to introduce sanctions if someone does not practice child marriage
Social influence - social pressure (rewards, sanctions, sensitivity, exceptions) (<i>another term for outcome expectations</i>)	% of respondents who feel confident in their ability to choose not to marry their daughter before they turn 18 despite social pressure

* Modified from [UNICEF MENARO](#) tools submitted to the Learning Collaborative

PROS AND CONS OF VARIOUS MEASUREMENT APPROACHES

As you select an approach to measuring social norms, your considerations will include your programmatic objectives, where you are in the program cycle, and logistical aspects of data collection, analysis and use. In Table 16 below, we provide key considerations of each of the measurement approaches reviewed in this section.

Regardless of which approach you choose, use findings from your formative exploration ([Step 1: Explore](#)) and the norms identified as most salient to your program’s TOC ([Step 2: Define and Align](#)) to ensure that your questionnaire is narrowed to the norms, behaviors, and population of interest to your program. No one is served by exhaustive lists of questions about norms and potential reference groups.

TABLE 16: SOCIAL NORMS MEASUREMENT APPROACH CONSIDERATIONS		
MEASUREMENT APPROACH	CONSIDER USING IF YOUR PROGRAM... (PROGRAMMATIC CONSIDERATIONS)	DATA CONSIDERATIONS
Enumerating egocentric reference groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans to involve specific named reference group individuals in the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires significant training of data collectors Takes more time asked of respondent If people have multiple reference groups and you want to enumerate them all, this method may be too time-consuming and difficult
Comparing egocentric and broader community reference groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to be able to understand how respondents’ individual behavior aligns with or differs from their perceptions of how their reference groups behave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will need to ask two sets of questions to get at both reference groups
Determining relative influence of different reference groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would benefit from knowing the relative importance of different groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be done as a stand-alone set of questions to understand generally who influences an individual’s beliefs or behaviors, which may be useful formative information for your program, or to triangulate with your exploratory findings Could add an “other” option to the list of reference groups which is not possible when you put the reference groups directly in to the question
Asking single-item questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just wants to know about one behavior and corresponding norm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes up less space on a survey Easier to train staff to administer
Estimating how common norms are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is looking to measure norm change over time and therefore requires greater estimate precision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be unfamiliar to respondents, so may require more time to explain.

Creating or adapting indices or scales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has lots of single-item measures that contribute to a single measure • Was not able to directly measure with single question 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To date, very few social norms scales have been rigorously developed and validated
Using Vignettes and vignette experiments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a good knowledge of the cultural and linguistic milieu • Wants to ask about sensitive topics that respondents might normally not talk about openly or respond to honestly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More difficult to design and administer • If the scenario is very similar to the respondent's own circumstance, they may give an answer that reflects their own belief or behavior • If the characters or scenario are not matched with the respondent's situation, their responses may be overly dramatized or unrealistic
Asking about Outcome Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows that a norm or norms exist, but would like to understand how strongly these are enforced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential sanctions should be informed by formative research to ensure they are realistic and not exaggerated

STEP 4: UNDERSTAND AND ACT

STEP 4- UNDERSTAND AND ACT	
When to use:	Once you have data.
What is covered here:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tips on how to understand and explore your data on social norms• Tips on how to use your findings to improve programming and policy• Reflections on why measuring social norms well is so important

The amount of information you gather during even reasonably limited efforts to examine social norms can feel overwhelming. Being able to make sense of the data you've collected and use it to answer the key questions you are interested in is essential to getting the most out of your efforts, whether you are a program manager, planner, designer, or evaluator.

In this section, we provide some tips on what to look for in your data, how to approach answering key questions, and how to best make use of your findings to improve programs and policy. These tips are based on the experience of members of the Learning Collaborative, including the Measurement, Theory, and Scale-up Communities and focus on what we see as the main questions you may want to address in your work. These questions should be driven by the thinking you have done about your project in each of the previous steps and reflect the theory of program change that you developed in [Step 2: Define and Align](#).

There are some relationships between norms and other program factors that we recommend examining and suggest here some simple approaches to doing so that do not require statistical training. This section however is **not** a methodological guide to analyzing social norm data, as that is an area that requires particular expertise and training. We strongly recommend working closely with a research partner to help you conduct more sophisticated analyses of your data.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR DATA

The questions that you will want to examine with your social norms data will depend on your project and the TOC and aims that you developed at its outset. Based on experience working on social norms projects and certain characteristics that we know to be distinct about social norms, there are a few relationships between norms and other factors in your program that we recommend assessing. We provide here some key questions to help you frame your investigation of these relationships as well as some simple analytic approaches to guide your investigation.

Is your TOC working as Expected?

If you have a comparison group, it will be helpful to compare any changes you see in the behavior you are trying to change in both groups. You will also want to check if the pathways you suggest, including changes in norms, are also different in the two groups. Seeing change in your outcome of interest and in the indicators along the pathway to change is strong evidence that your TOC is correct, especially if these changes are stronger in the group you directly intervened on.

It is rarely the case that the comparison group does not change, so it is often difficult to see change that is greater than what is happening over time. If you do find that your comparison group is changing, it will be important to understand why that is happening. Monitoring what is happening programmatically (i.e. exposure to other norms programming) will be key to understanding how your program fared and whether there are intervening factors over the course of your program in both the intervention and in the comparison groups.

You will also want to check whether the intervention group was exposed as you expected. Measuring and examining how much exposure your intervention and control groups actually experienced will help you to quantify whether your intervention caused the change in behavior and norms that you may be detecting. If you find that your intervention group is not changing as you would expect, it is often the case that program reach was not as extensive as planned as the intensity of exposure (dose) is strongly related to change. It is also important to examine how much exposure your comparison groups may have experienced as this could be a marker of spillover. Measuring direct exposure (e.g. attending a project activity) and indirect exposure (hearing about program messaging from a person directly exposed) will be important to understand if your project messages are diffusing beyond directly exposed participants to others in the intervention and comparison areas.

How Strong are the Norms and How Do They Intersect with Other Socio-Ecological Factors?

In [Step 2: Define and Align](#) we introduced a conceptual model which illustrated how individuals are influenced both by the immediate society they are a part of and the broader physical, social, economic, or cultural environment. In terms of norms, this framework highlights the importance of understanding how norms work together with other factors in sustaining a given behavior. Understanding how these different factors work together to create the environment or ecology that decisions about behavior are made in, how that is related to the behavior you are interested in, and how they intersect with norms can be addressed through the following analytical questions:

- How strongly are the different factors influencing behavior; such as norms, features of the physical environment (access to health facilities, markets, etc.), policies/regulations, cultural values or economic barriers) related with one another. At a minimum, you should look at these key relationships:
 - How is (are) the norm(s) you identified related to the other contributing factors?
 - In cases where more than one norm is influencing a behavior, how do the different norms relate with each other?
- How strong is the relationship between each of the potential contributing factors with the behavior you are interested in? Examine each of these relationships separately – for example, if your outcome was child marriage among girls, you might see how that is related with community gender norms first, then how child marriage is related to the education of the girls’ mother, and so on. The questions you would be seeking to answer are a bit different than in the question above, as here you are focused much more specifically on the behavior of interest, such as:
 - Do each of the factors show a relationship to the behavior of interest?
 - Do each of the norms individually show a relationship to the behavior of interest?
- What is the relationship of the contributing factors collectively with the behavior you are interested in? Here you would want to look for things like:
 - When all factors are considered similarly, do any stand out as especially strongly associated with the harmful practice?
 - Does any particular norm stand out as especially strongly associated compared to the others?
 - Are there natural groupings of factors that are strongly related with your behavior, such as economic factors or a particular collection of types of norms?
- Does the relationship between the norm and the behavior of interest depend on features of the environment/ecology, such as ethnicity, geographic location, or social class/position? For example, if you are planning an intervention in both a rural and an urban area, you will want to analyze the relationship between the norm and the behavior of interest in these areas separately, as the features of these contexts might affect the influence of the norm.

This analysis will provide insight into the range of factors and the strength of norms that are associated with the behavior you are targeting. This type of analysis will also tell you if there are differences in the relationship of the norm(s) and harmful practice due to differences in context and circumstance. Different intervention strategies may be needed if the context modifies the norm – harmful practice relationship.

In examining these relationships, you will be interested in both the direction and strength of these relationships. For example, if you measure a higher level of descriptive norms in one community than in another, is that related with higher or lower levels of the behavior you are interested in? Do different factors and norms ‘move’ in the same direction (usually termed as a ‘positive’ relationship if both increase together and a ‘negative’ relationship if both decrease together). You will need to look at the relationships between different factors that might shape a behavior and the relationship that each of these factors have with the behavior itself. It is important to do both as that will give you an idea of both what might be causing the behavior and how those different drivers work together.

If the factors do seem to be related, either to each other or the behavior of interest, you’ll also need to know how strong that relationship is. How you go about assessing strength and direction of relationships will depend on the type of data you collected and your selected analytic approach. For instance, with qualitative data this could be a thematic analysis versus with quantitative data any of a variety of analytic approaches ranging from simple examination of descriptive statistics to more sophisticated analysis techniques such as regression analysis. As with the analysis of any of your project data, we encourage you to develop an analysis plan based on your conceptual model and TOC.

Are the Norms You’ve Identified Protective or Harmful?

It is common practice to focus on how harmful norms impact the health and wellbeing of your population of interest (and possibly how that effect varies because of your intervention). Yet, a protective norm might be operating before your intervention or emerge because of your intervention. This protective norm may have a direct impact on the health outcome or it may alter the impact of the harmful norm where the protective norm is present.

Let’s say, for instance, that you are analyzing baseline data from your project in a particular country to understand whether a norm sustaining intimate partner violence (IPV) exists in your two intervention areas (one in the North, one in the South of the country). By examining the relationship of the norm and the outcome separately by region, you may find an association between the normative belief and the perpetration of violence in the North, but not in the South. You could conclude that such a norm has an impact on the health outcome in the North (where people are expected to hit their spouse) and that it doesn’t have this impact in the South. However, this difference might be due to a protective norm against hitting your spouse in the Southern area which is modifying the expected relationship between the harmful norm and the health outcome. To understand whether a protective norm exists, you could:

- Examine the relationship of the protective norm and the harmful practice you are targeting. Is there a protective norm present in the communities where the harmful practice is very low? This would suggest that the positive norm may be modifying the relationship of the harmful norm and the harmful practice where the positive norm is present.
- If you suspect that there are positive norms that have not been identified you might conduct a quick post-baseline qualitative data collection, similar to those discussed in [Step 1: Explore](#), as part of your monitoring activities and integrate measurement of the positive norms at midline.

Understanding protective norms will expand your vision and imagination of how an effective program could operate in these contexts, potentially leveraging the opportunity of creating similar protective norms in contexts

where those norms do not yet exist. Finally, even if you do not find a protective norm at baseline, you will want to look at its existence at midline and endline to identify the resurgence of positive norms that were not apparent at baseline or the emergence of a new protective norm over time.

What is the Relationship between Norms and People’s Own Attitudes?

Norms can be aligned or misaligned with people’s individual attitudes. When norms are misaligned, most members of a group dislike a given practice, but believe that most others like it. Imagine, for instance, a community where most of the parents individually dislike the practice of female genital cutting, but still have their daughters cut it because they believe (incorrectly) most other parents in their community approve of it (a phenomenon mostly referred to as pluralistic ignorance). In that case, parents are complying with a norm that is not based in an actual collective preference. Conversely, when norms and attitudes are aligned, most group members both approve of a given practice and (correctly) believe that most others approve of it too. Some ways to examine this might be:

- In your whole dataset, look at how attitudes and norms relate. Are they aligned or misaligned?
- Divide your study sample into smaller groups, such as villages (if you used a sampling approach that included clustering, you could do this by cluster unit). Repeat the analysis from Point 1 for each of the groups separately to see if the same pattern emerges everywhere, or whether there are some places that are different. Are there places where the norms and attitudes are aligned but others where they are misaligned?
- Repeat this analysis at midline and/or endline if you are doing that type of study to see if the overall patterns and the cluster-level patterns change over time and think about why that could be.

Exploring the question of alignment/misalignment of norms and attitudes will be useful no matter what stage of analysis you are at, including the types of exploratory analyses you might do in [Step 1: Explore](#). When you find a misalignment of norms and attitudes, it is likely that changes in norms will be easier and faster, while alignment will have the opposite effect. Understanding possible differences in degree of alignment will inform the types of programming that will be most effective in a given area or which a particular population.

Who are the Different Important Reference Groups?

As we discussed in the [Step 3: Measure](#) section, identifying and defining the relevant reference group(s) for individuals and groups is a key component of understanding the influence of norms on behavior. For a given norm and target group, there are likely different reference groups that matter for behavior, each with a different level of influence. For example, a woman’s decision to seek help for intimate partner violence (IPV) may be influenced by the degree to which her family (very often an important reference group) supports her decision and the degree of support she feels from her community or religious leaders (two more important reference groups). Even for the same behavior, different people may have different reference groups – men and women, for example, may have different groups of people that they look to for social approval.

Your analysis will be able to reveal the people whose behavior is most influential in a community and potential differences by sub-group. If you have collected data across multiple reference groups that you consider to play different roles (another reason to think carefully about how to structure your data collection), you can identify potential differences in the reference groups and their relationship to the target behavior. Some of the key questions you may want to explore are:

- How do normative beliefs and behaviors differ as you examine different important reference groups? If your data reveal that most people in your sample believe that “almost everyone does X”, but that only 20% of the population actually do X, that might point to the fact that that 20% of the population has great visibility or greater power in the community. Examining the normative beliefs in these influential sub-

groups may highlight key programmatic targets whose influence can help to achieve sustainable change (sometimes these groups are referred to as ‘gatekeepers’ or ‘social influencers’).

- Are the norms within different reference groups associated (correlated) with one another and if they are correlated, are they correlated positively or negatively? If they are correlated positively this may indicate that they are reinforcing one another whereas if they are not correlated or negatively correlated then this may indicate that one group doesn’t influence the other or that one group tries to distinguish itself from the other.

How Long Might It Take for Norms to Change?

It is generally the case that attitudes change faster than norms, as social processes are often very slow to change. As a result, you should not necessarily expect to see very large changes in norms over the course of your project, especially if the time frame is quite short. It is important that your theory of program change account for this and make it clear that other things that have to change before normative change can take place, particularly attitudes. While you may not see rapid changes in norms, shifts in attitudes can suggest that over time you might see changes in the norms those attitudes relate to. In order to capture normative change, you likely will need to plan to:

- Collect data at repeated points over quite a long period of time;
- Also collect information on all the smaller things that need to change before norms and the behaviors of interest do; and
- Compare levels of attitudes, norms and other factors over time to get some idea of what the broader patterns of change are and what the relationship between each piece might be.

You must be aware that this is often challenging because social processes are inherently complex and interrelated. It is possible, for example, that you observe changes in the behavior of interest without significant normative change because the *influence* of the norm relative to other factors such as the economic situation has weakened. It is important to be open-minded about the patterns of change you may see and to think carefully about how these fit together – if necessary, you should revise your conceptual framework to reflect what you learn from your analysis.

ACTING UPON YOUR FINDINGS

Once you have analyzed your data and interpreted your findings, you will want to use those findings to improve your programming and determine how best to adapt and scale-up your program as well as to inform the field about their implications for policy, research and future programming. As part of this process, you should involve project staff and other stakeholders, consider practicality, and acknowledge limitations. Broadly speaking, you should consider the implications of your findings for:

- Program Design: Insights from your program evaluation will be useful to inform design modifications to the TOC, program strategies, monitoring systems, and/or measurement frameworks.
- Plans for Scale-up: It is important to think carefully about what the ‘bigger-picture’ implications of your findings are in terms of large-scale and/or longer-term changes that can modify behaviors. In doing so, you must consider what the results imply on whether and how the program should be scaled up.
- Sharing the Learning: In large part, dissemination of your social-norms program results should follow principles and processes similar to that with any of your programs. There are however a few aspects of social norms programs that make the dissemination and advocacy of the results all the more important.

We expand on each of these points below.

Modifying Your Program Theory of Change

With the findings in hand, it is important to return to the initial change theory and program design to determine whether your findings are in line with what you initially anticipated and if not, what program changes you could consider making in light of the findings. Specifically, in terms of your conceptual framework and TOC, ask yourself these types of questions:

- Do the findings support that causal relationships that you anticipated in your conceptual framework or TOC? If not, what do they suggest are the relationships that matter for the behavior you are interested in?
- Do the findings indicate a need to tweak the existing TOC to focus more specifically on activities that specifically address the social norms to achieve your desired outcomes? Often change theories focus too much on individual outcomes such as unintended pregnancy and not on the normative outcomes, such as changes in the norms around contraceptive use or delaying pregnancy. If the focus on changing norms is not explicit in your theoretical models, your measurement approach, and how you analyze your data, then strategies and expected normative shifts may never be integrated into programs or their evaluation.
- Does your project address all or some of the key social factors influencing behavioral outcomes, including identified social norms? It is very common that you find that the behavior you are interested in changing is influenced by other factors – some of these will influence the behavior directly and others will be more indirectly, influencing the norm that is related to the behavior (some will have both a direct and indirect effect). The interrelationships between these factors and norms are sometimes not clear before looking through the data you collect, so revisiting your program design to make sure that it is informed by what you've learned will result in better programming and improved outcomes.

Rethinking Program Design and Implementation

Interpreting the findings and results and drawing conclusions from the data you have collected and analyzed involves stepping back to consider what the results mean programmatically. It may be that you found norms that at first you thought were not particularly important to be really critical drivers of other norms and your behavior of interest, or that your behavior is driven mainly by factors other than norms. Your program model may have focused on the wrong reference groups or overlooked a protective norm or may have assumed greater agreement between norms and attitudes than you are finding in your data. Rather than represent a failure, this is an opportunity to refine your program design and develop new and better programmatic approaches to identifying and shifting norms.

Improving Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

You are probably very familiar (maybe too familiar!) with program monitoring and information systems (MIS). A program MIS typically involves recording completion of activities/outputs and looking qualitatively at how programs are being implemented and their immediate effects, though can also involve collecting feedback on how satisfied the beneficiaries are with the program and short-term changes (such as in knowledge around a particular topic). Project monitoring during the project and project evaluation at the culmination of the project should be designed on the information needs that the program TOC and logic model suggest are key pathways of change in your program. The evaluation plan and MIS for programs aiming to change norms (either as the main focus or because they are important to a behavior of interest) will need to collect some information that is different from what programs that do not focus on norms collect. Ideally the MIS will also capture information on the costs of different program elements. Guidance on the unique considerations for collecting cost data in social norms focused projects can be found in the [Costing of Norms-Shifting Interventions: A Primer from the Passages Project](#).

Some questions to ask to ensure that monitoring and evaluation are aligned with the project design and will be effective in helping capture social norms include:

- Are norms-related activity indicators included in the logical framework/project monitoring system? Does your monitoring system capture the implementation and outputs of those activities in a way that provides useful information? For example, it may not be enough to simply document that a community meeting took place, but also who attended (which will help you understand if you are reaching the important reference groups).
- Is information being collected for all the groups being reached by the project, both target and reference groups? It is important to have information on all the relevant groups that might influence a behavior.
- Is the process of diffusion being documented, that is, the extent that people directly reached by the project are sharing new ideas within their family, peer groups, and beyond? This can be explored using some monitoring data collection tools at multiple intervals in the program cycle.
- Is the process of community change being monitored, documented, and used to inform adjustments in implementation strategies, such as emerging social/normative changes, both positive (public declarations and other events) and negative (sanctions and social pushback)? This will involve including data collection tools in your monitoring and information system that go beyond simply tracking activities, as these types of changes in some ways can be viewed more as short-term outcomes. Furthermore, some of these will involve looking inwards at how your program team is functioning and using the data.
- Do additional variables and questions need to be included in the project evaluation baseline and endline tools to be able to measure shifts in norms that project is aiming to influence?
- Is there a strategy to measure direct and indirect exposure to the intervention (indirect exposure may be due to diffusion effects and is more difficult to evaluate)?
- How does the evaluation assess the influence of reference groups on individuals who make up the primary target group? (Many evaluations focus only on collecting information from target groups.)
- Does the evaluation plan allow for sufficient time to realistically expect to be able to measure shifts in norms? If not, are there other evaluation approaches more useful to stakeholders at the time an evaluation is planned?

Adapting and Scaling Up

Almost all social change projects start small and if shown effective may be scaled up to new areas or new or larger populations to achieve outcomes at larger population scale. The aims of scale-up will be defined differently depending upon the initial project results as well as the receiving community context, organizational structures, and available resources. Experience shows that project scale up and adaptations of the original design almost always go hand-in-hand. Social norms focused projects, in particular, typically require adaptations as they are introduced in to new socio-cultural contexts and new target populations as well as when they are adopted by new organizations or integrated in to ongoing programs. The key, though, is to ensure that normative change elements yield similar social norms outcomes after adaptations are made. It is essential when planning for scale-up to refer to your findings from earlier measurement and implementation monitoring in order to ensure that critical project elements are not lost in the scale-up process. Some important questions that can inform how you adapt your project are as follows:

- What were the project elements (i.e., engagement in certain activities, certain types of exposure etc.) that were most strongly associated with the desired outcomes?
- Were there some project elements that were associated with outcomes over a longer period of time (i.e., seemed more sustainable) than others?
- Were there any project results that were counter-intuitive or were there any unintended consequences or backlash that resulted from the project that would require project adjustments going forward?

- Which reference groups were most influential to your social norms of interest?
- What were the costs associated with the various project elements?

How you use the answers to the questions above may vary depending upon which type of scale your project is aiming to achieve. Scale-up can be achieved by:

- Expanding to a broader **geographic region** (replication by the already-experienced implementing organizations into areas with similar social and other characteristics);
- Adapting the initial program design to reach **new populations** (to improve relevance, for example, initially working with adolescent girls and during scale up adding boys, due to the community or other demands);
- Adapting the initial program design to **fit within another existing program** (for easier integration into existing projects that provide platforms for scale-up), expanding by including **more user organizations** (a strategy to achieve greater reach or depth via intervention expansion by new organizations); and
- **Institutionalizing the intervention into public sector** programs (a strategy to ensure continued technical and financial support for offering a social change effort at scale, for example, integrating the project approach into national high-impact practice guidance, developing a core technical expertise within a ministry).

Sharing the Learning

It is important that the lessons from your experience measuring norms and norm change be shared as widely as possible for a number of reasons. In large part, dissemination of your social-norms program results should follow principles and processes similar to that with any of your programs. There are, however, a few aspects of social norms programs that make the dissemination and advocacy of the results all the more important. These aspects being:

- Norms-shifting projects or norms-focused projects typically engage with communities. Creating community feedback loops to share findings and involve communities in interpreting the findings is vital not only for program learning but also is an ethical obligation.
- Only by incorporating sharing and learning efforts at the community level can potential backlash from norms changes be identified early and mitigation put into place.
- Since measurement in its nascence, sharing back with local communities and broader learning communities (e.g., other practitioners and researchers interested in social norms) to ensure interpretation and understanding is all the more critical. Sharing of measurement approaches and tools in particular will facilitate the development of more refined and validated measurement approaches and ultimately improved comparability of results across norms focused projects.
- The complexity of norms change and the fact that change happens at a collective level means that a range of actors – recipients, implementers, other local stakeholders, and evaluators - need to be informed about the findings and involved in thinking about their implications.

Disseminating your project learnings will help the field understand better how different measurement approaches and tools work in different settings, what works particularly well and what doesn't work as well. Your project learnings can in turn be used to advocate for programmatic approaches that work and for policies that will both encourage protective norms and discourage negative norms related to harmful behaviors. While it is beyond the scope of this document to lay out a comprehensive advocacy approach, it is important that you provide resources to your program team to 'spread the word' about the program, measures and results. There may be many government, research, NGO, and donor organizations that should be made aware of your findings and could benefit from understanding your social norms and other programmatic findings.

The goal of this guide is to provide implementers with a broad guide to understanding and measuring social norms within the context of programs. The intent of this document is to provide you with the basic tools and understanding of how to conduct research into social norms, which should be used to inform your programmatic approach. If you follow these guidelines, you will collect usable data that can be integrated into more sophisticated analyses and expand the field's understanding of both how to best measure social norms and what works in terms of programmatic efforts to achieve desired behavior change through understanding and shifting social norms.

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