SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS TIP SHEETS

Changing Norms to Address Gender-based Violence and Harmful Practices

Tip Sheet 5: Gender-based Violence

UNFPA

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UNFPA's Asia Pacific Regional Office has developed a series of Social and Gender Norms Tip Sheets. These resources are designed to support UNFPA country offices in the region to implement social and gender norm change programmes to address gender-based violence and harmful practices, including child marriage and female genital mutilation. The Tip Sheets are designed to complement UNFPA's forthcoming global **Toolkit on Transforming Gender and Social Norms.**

Gender-based violence (GBV) is not always a social norm or gender norm, and norm change programming is not always necessary to shift acceptance and prevalence of violent behaviours. Increased access to justice, availability of infrastructure and quality support services, economic and income-generation opportunities, as well as legislative and policy reforms, all contribute to reduced prevalence of violence. Underlying harmful gender and social norms influence virtually all forms of GBV. Even if a specific form of violence is not itself a norm, harmful social and gender norms often reinforce and justify violent behaviour. ***Norm diagnosis***[1] *can help to determine whether a specific form of violence is a norm, or if indirect social and gender norms are significant drivers of violence in the setting where the behaviour takes place. Where harmful social and gender norms are a key factor reinforcing violent behaviours, norm change interventions can contribute to violence prevention and response as part of a comprehensive approach across the socioecological framework.*

What's included here:

Figures and tables:

1 See Tip Sheet #2: **Norm Diagnosis**.

Table 1: Definitions[2]

Attitudes	What I think. My personal opinions.
Behaviour	What I do. Individual or collective actions and practices.
Personal normative beliefs	What I think I should do, and what I think others should do as well. • **Prudential**[3] **normative beliefs**: What I think is in my own and others' best interests. • **Non-prudential normative beliefs**: What I think is the right thing to do, based on ethical or moral convictions and values.
Social norms	**Patterns of behaviour** that are motivated by a desire to conform to the shared social expectations of a community or group. The **"rules of action"** shared by communities or groups that define what is considered normal and acceptable behaviour. Social norms include **beliefs** about what most other people do (what is common) and approve of (what is expected): • **Descriptive norm:** What I think most others do. What is considered typical or common. Sometimes called empirical expectations. • **Injunctive norm:** What I think most others approve of and expect me to do/what I should do according to other people. What is considered appropriate and "normal." Sometimes called normative expectations.
Direct norm	When a practice is itself a social and/or gender norm and directly determines people's behaviour. Social expectations are one of the main reasons people practice the behaviour. I conform to the practice because I think most others do (descriptive norm) and they expect me to as well (injunctive norm).[4]
Indirect norm	Norms[5] that help keep a practice in place as part of a wider system of social expectations. These include closely related norms–such as proximal norms, which strongly influence behaviour and create a favourable environment for it, and deeply rooted "meta-norms" that contribute to and uphold gender inequality.
Gender norms	Social norms defining **acceptable and appropriate actions** for women and men as well as girls and boys in a given group or society.
Reference group	The specific community or group of people whose opinions, expectations and behaviours influence an individual's attitudes and actions around a particular practice. Reference groups can differ for specific norms. Reference groups may also be virtual and online communities.
Sanctions/ benefits	**Outcome expectations**: a person's beliefs or expectations about how others will respond if they comply with or resist the norm. These anticipated reactions help enforce compliance to the norm. They include: • **Sanctions/consequences** of non-compliance with the norm. Social pressure or other forms of punishment. A negative outcome expectation. • **Benefits and rewards** for complying with the norm. Social approval or other rewards. A positive outcome expectation. **Power dynamics**: those with the power to impose sanctions have greater (relative) power.
Positive deviance	When individuals in a community act in ways that significantly differ from prevailing social norms but achieve more positive outcomes, despite the risk of sanctions for challenging social expectations.

2 Definitions are drawn from the UNFPA's forthcoming global Toolkit on Transforming Gender and Social Norms, as well as other sources cited in this Tip Sheet.

3 In this context, "prudential" refers to beliefs concerned with protecting the wellbeing of oneself, others or the wider community.

4 This is known as "conditional preference," where people choose to act based on what they think most others in their reference group do and expect of them.[xiii] The concept is important for norm diagnosis as it helps distinguish socially motivated behaviours from those driven by other factors, such as moral convictions or material realities. Conditional preference can be measured in both quantitative and qualitative studies through hypothetical scenarios or vignettes (see Tip Sheet #6: **Measurement**).

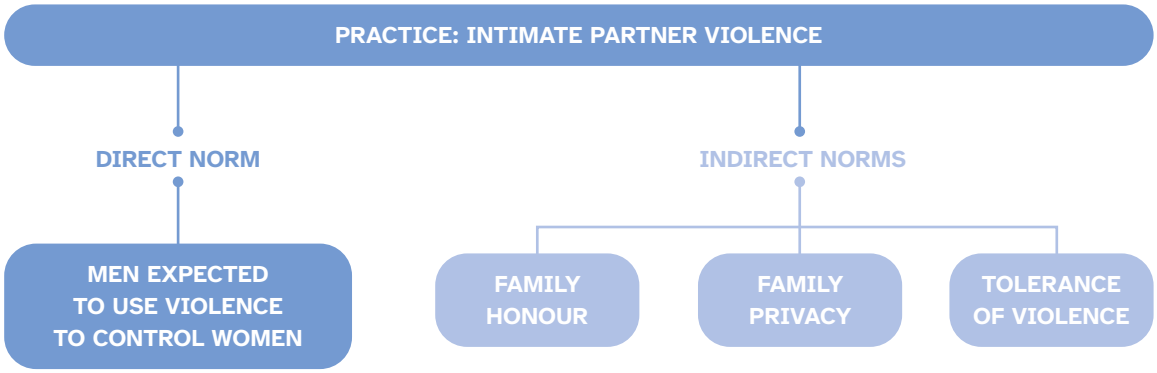
5 Throughout the Tip Sheets, "norms" is used as shorthand for social and gender norms, per the definitions in this table.

Is it a norm?

Not all forms of violence are social or gender norms in all settings.[1] *For example, forms of violence that are often hidden or secret, such as trafficking or sexual abuse, are unlikely to constitute norms: perpetrators are not usually engaging in these forms of violence because they believe other people do it or because there is a shared community expectation that they will do so.* However, **sexual harassment and sexual violence** may be norms in some settings where i) prevalence is high; ii) violence is normalized; and iii) there is a high level of impunity (no punishment or consequences) for perpetrators. *For example: settings where most women have experienced sexual harassment on public transport, or where a high proportion of women have experienced non-partner sexual abuse or assault.* In other contexts, these behaviours may be seen as deviant and unacceptable. **Honour killing** is more likely to be a norm in contexts where: i) male family members are expected to punish women and girls who are perceived to break rules about female sexual purity and fidelity; ii) there is a belief that many other men and boys commit honour killing; and iii) men and boys who do not keep women and girls under control are seen as weak or unmanly.

In high-prevalence settings, where violence is normalized and acceptable, **intimate partner violence (IPV)** may be a **direct** social norm, as shown in Figure 1. Men may be expected to use physical violence to control women and children (injunctive norm) and may believe most other men are also violent towards their families (descriptive norm). Men's use of violence may also reinforce their status with other men, while men who do not use violence in their relationships may be perceived as weak or unmanly. In lower prevalence settings, however, where IPV is not expected or seen as common, it may not be a social norm and there may be social sanctions against some forms of violence. Individual factors such as a perpetrator's childhood experience of violence, greater economic or social power over the victim, or involvement in other forms of violence (such as gang violence) may play a larger role.

Figure 1: Direct and Indirect Norms. Adapted from: Cislaghi and Heise 2018.



Across both high- and low-prevalence settings, even where violence is not a **direct** norm and/or is secret and hidden, it is sustained by powerful **indirect** social and gender norms. Depending on the setting, these may include norms around family privacy, harmony and keeping conflict within the family, male dominance in the household, and strict gender roles and norms of masculinity and femininity. In high-prevalence settings, there may also be high levels of *acceptance* of violence: most people, including women, hold individual attitudes that condone or accept it.

Violence is itself used as a **sanction** or punishment, *for example when women and girls step out of gender roles or transgress strongly held gender norms around motherhood, sexuality and women's unpaid care and domestic roles.* Understanding the role social and gender norms play in specific forms of violence in different contexts is essential to inform effective intervention design. Norm change efforts must be designed to tackle the specific form of violence, and the direct and indirect norms that support it. Formative research can help to understand whether a form of violence such as IPV is a direct norm, as well as how influential social and gender norms are relative to other drivers of violence, in specific settings and among specific population groups and communities. Formative research is also important to understand how intersecting forms of discrimination and vulnerability,

such as disability, ethnicity and socio-economic status, influence individual and community experiences of violence and harmful social and gender norms that support violent behaviours.[6]

Table 2: Norm Diagnosis Examples

	Descriptive norm	Injunctive norm	Sanctions	Conditional preference
IPV likely **IS** a social norm when...	Most men believe that most other men in their community are violent towards their partners	Most men believe that most other men in their community expect them to use violence to control their partners	Most men believe they will face negative consequences if they do not control their partners using violence	Based on these social expectations, most men choose to be violent towards their partners
IPV is **NOT** likely a norm when...	Most men believe that most other men in their community are **not** violent towards partners	Most men believe other men in their community do **not** expect them to be violent towards partners	Most men do **not** face serious consequences if they choose not to use violence, while men who do use violence may experience consequences	Men's use of violence is guided by personal histories, structural factors and other drivers rather than conformity

The evidence-base for the effectiveness of social and gender norm change interventions is still relatively nascent for some forms of violence and harmful practices. However, comprehensive GBV prevention approaches–which may include norm change alongside legal, economic and service system interventions–are evidence-based and have proven effective in reducing violence. GBV prevention frameworks recognize that while harmful social and gender norms operate across the socioecological model, **violence is driven by a combination of factors, of which norms are only one**.[ii] GBV prevention and response interventions are grounded in feminist social movements and explicitly designed to address unequal power relations and transform gender inequalities.[iii,iv] This is not always the case with standalone social norm change approaches, including those targeting specific harmful practices, that focus on changing the direct norm which coincides with the behaviour without challenging wider indirect gender norms that influence the practice.

Norm change approaches that do not address gender and power dynamics are less likely to be successful in shifting deeply rooted gender-based harmful practices that impact women and girls and that intersect with other forms of discrimination against, and marginalization of, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. That said, there is commonality between GBV prevention and norm change programming strategies, such as community engagement, dialogue and mobilization. Social and gender norm change tools and approaches can be integrated into GBV prevention interventions to help identify and address the specific indirect norms that are most **salient** (important) in supporting violent behaviour and acceptability and normalization of violence. *For example, specific indirect norms may include survivors not disclosing violence or seeking help due to social and gender norms around privacy and family honour, or controlling behaviour being viewed as an expression of "love" or "passion" due to norms around sexuality and relationships.* Measuring the impact of GBV prevention and response interventions on harmful social and gender norms that support violence can help to deepen understanding of how these norms influence and reinforce violent behaviour. Guidance and tools are available to support social and gender norm change in GBV prevention programming, such as resources developed by the Prevention Collaborative and under the Respect Framework.

6 See Tip Sheet #2: **Norm Diagnosis** for further guidance on assessing whether practices are social and gender norms.

The **Respect Framework** classifies harmful gender norms that uphold male privilege and limit women's autonomy as a community-level risk factor in the socioecological framework. Transforming attitudes, beliefs and norms that support non-violence and gender-equitable relationships, and promote women's empowerment, is one of seven key strategies to prevent violence. The framework includes guidance on effective approaches to tackle harmful norms and promote positive norms, together with programme examples and an assessment of the effectiveness of norm change interventions.[ii]

Which norms are we trying to change?

Many of the indirect norms that support violence also underpin harmful practices and impact women and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). These include **ideals of masculinity and femininity**, including male sexual entitlement; women and girls' chastity and fidelity before and after marriage; and associating and valuing women for their reproductive and domestic roles. Norms around rigid **gender roles**, including strict gender division of labour, men's role as head of the household, and male dominance over the family, reinforce gender inequality and unequal power relations, and underpin violence. These indirect norms are depicted in the top two boxes in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Norms that Support Violence against Women. Source: UN Women and World Health Organization.

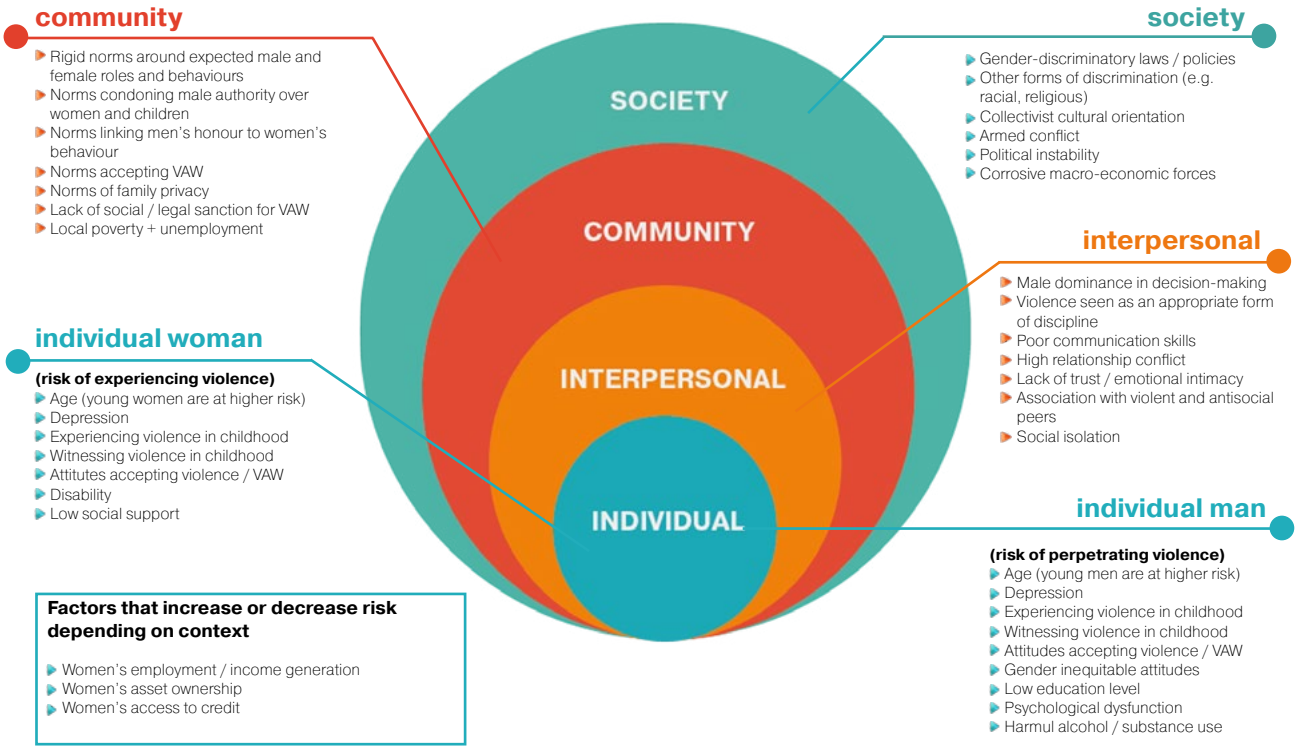
TYPE OF BELIEFS/NORM	EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC BELIEFS AND NORMS
IDEALS OF MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY	• Dominant masculinity and submissive femininity • Male sexual entitlement (in/outside of marriage) • Women should be virgins until married and not engage in extra-marital sex • Men should be tough and control female behaviour • Women's value linked to marriage and childbearing • Divorced, widowed, single and infertile women are stigmatised
STRICT GENDER ROLES	• Men are heads of households and key decision-makers • Rigid gender division of labour – men as providers/women as carers • Men have authority over household income and assets • Wives should be obedient to husbands
ACCEPTANCE OF VAW	• Men's role includes disciplining women and children • Violence is legitimate way to resolve conflict • Violence is a legitimate form of discipline • Violence is legitimate to defend individual and/or family honour
FAMILY PRIVACY	• Disclosure of violence is a threat to family name • Others should not intervene in family matters • Women who disclose violence bring shame to the family

Acceptance of violence, including men's role and right to use it to resolve conflict and to discipline women, children and others, also supports violent attitudes and behaviour. Similarly, norms of **family privacy** and harmony discourage bystander intervention and women's disclosure of violence and help-seeking, further reinforcing violence. These indirect norms, which also make it harder to address less acceptable or hidden forms of violence such as sexual exploitation or abuse, are shown in the bottom two boxes of Figure 2.

Other drivers such as poverty, conflict, high levels of other forms of violence (such as gang violence) and gender inequality more broadly also impact prevalence.[iv] Because the risk factors that drive violence are complex and vary depending on the form of violence, setting and perpetrator characteristics, it is important to identify which norms are particularly salient, as well as how norms intersect with other drivers across the socioecological framework (Figure 3).

Norm change programming is time- and resource-intensive, and dedicated norm change interventions require sustained funding as well as investment in evaluation. The decision to implement a norm change programme should be based on a nuanced understanding of the **specific direct and indirect gender and social norms** associated with each form of GBV to ensure effectiveness of norm change interventions. *For example, while transforming norms around gender inequality is important, this alone may not effectively change the specific indirect norms that support certain forms of violence, such as honour killing or sexual harassment. In these cases, more targeted norms, such as those related to women's sexual purity or male sexual entitlement, may play a more direct role in reinforcing the violent behaviour.* Formative research can help to identify which norms are most salient, prioritize which norms to address, and determine how norm change can complement other interventions.

Figure 3: Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Violence. Source: Prevention Collaborative.



What does the evidence say?

Successful interventions to prevent violence are more likely to be multi-component, meaning they address multiple factors at different levels of the socioecological framework. Individual attitudes and social and gender norms are more likely to shift when broader environmental dynamics, such as laws and policies, community leadership and service provision, also support change. Community-based interventions, such as SASA!, that are participatory and explicitly engage with gender norms and unequal power relations, tend to be more effective in bringing about lasting change in harmful norms and violent behaviours.

Raising Voice's SASA! Together is an approach to violence against women prevention that builds on the experience and evidence generated by its predecessor, SASA! Both programmes use community mobilization, which is proven to be an effective strategy for social and gender norm change. Transforming unequal power relations and dynamics is at the heart of the approach. SASA! Together focuses on IPV, which is the most common form of GBV and occurs in all societies, through facilitated reflection on power dynamics and positive use of power in intimate relationships. The programme uses diffusion of innovation and social norm change theory to bring about change across the socioecological model through local activism, community leadership and institutional strengthening. SASA! Together explicitly addresses power dynamics around sex and sexuality, sexual decision-making and healthy sexual relationships. Quality of implementation is critical, including quality of facilitation and intensity and duration of programming: the programme is implemented over three years with at least weekly engagement. SASA! Together is specifically focused on measuring social norm change and has developed new tools, both to identify norms around gender and violence, and to measure changes in these norms.[v]

There is promising evidence that community activism and mobilization approaches are most effective when they involve intensive delivery (multiple sessions a week over 18 months to 3 years), work across the community, and provoke critical reflection and discussion. Group-based workshops with men and women using participatory group education approaches can help shift individual attitudes and behaviours. **Work with men and boys alone is not effective**: engaging women and men, and boys and girls is more effective than single-sex interventions.[ii,vi] More evidence is needed on the effectiveness of social marketing or edutainment when undertaken alone. However, these approaches can be effective when implemented to complement community mobilization and group education approaches. **Awareness-raising and mass media campaigns on their own are not effective** in shifting norms, but they can be used as part of an overall norm change programme that works across the socioecological framework, when designed appropriately.[ii,vi,vii]

Most available evidence relates to GBV prevention, measuring programme impact on prevalence and attitudes, but not on changes to specific harmful social and gender norms that support violence. While changes in violence and harmful practices can ultimately be tracked through national prevalence surveys such as DHS and MICS, these tools typically operate at national or sub-national levels and require substantial time to reflect measurable trends. This highlights the need for complementary, context-specific monitoring methods to capture short- to medium-term progress. It is not always clear in programme evaluations which elements of interventions specifically target underlying norm change versus attitude and behaviour change. Sometimes violent behaviour and the norms that support it are conflated (treated as the same). This makes it hard to assess whether shifts are a result of GBV prevention interventions which address norm change, or if changes are attributable to interventions addressing other factors across the socioecological framework.[viii]

Norm change programming on GBV

1. Design	2. Implementation	3. Monitoring	4. Data and Measurement
Formative research: • Identify attitudes, descriptive/injunctive norms, sanctions, reference groups • Power and gender analysis • Qualitative methods	• Community engagement • Identify positive deviants/ champions • Weaken/challenge sanctions • Reinforce positive behaviour	• Continuous monitoring • Track and respond to backlash • Identify unintended consequences • Adapt programming	• Measure impact of norm change interventions • Dedicated surveys (baseline, endline) • Use proxy measures as an indication of norm change

Table 3: Norm Change Programming Process

1. Design formative research

Are norms relevant?

Determine which GBV prevention interventions in specific settings or communities could benefit from a focus on social and gender norm change as part of a comprehensive approach to GBV prevention across the socioecological framework.

Including norm change in new and existing GBV interventions can help to accelerate change and reduce acceptability of violence. Existing GBV prevention interventions may be strengthened by identifying and measuring change in social and gender norms, including to measure the impact of programming on the indirect norms that support violence. This can help explain why interventions are not always successful in shifting prevalence and whether norms are playing a role in maintaining violent behaviours. As norms are not always a significant driver of specific forms of violence in all settings, careful consideration should be given to whether inclusion of norm change interventions will enhance GBV prevention programming. For more on norm diagnosis, see Tip Sheet #2.

In settings where prevalence of IPV remains high, or where prevalence of some forms of IPV such as physical violence has decreased but other forms such as sexual violence or controlling behaviour persist, these patterns may indicate that violence is a direct norm and/or is supported by powerful indirect norms. Identifying the most influential (salient) norms in contexts where violence appears to be *increasing or decreasing* can also be helpful to understand whether norms are changing or whether other factors are driving shifts in prevalence: *for example, during crises and emergencies when men's control and dominance over the family may be threatened or undermined.*[7] This can be done through formative research.

7 This happened during COVID-19 when some women experienced IPV for the first time in their relationships, in part due to economic pressure as well as isolation during lock-down.

Designing and conducting formative research

To guide the design of formative research, review available data and research on targeted settings/communities to identify: i) prevalence of different forms of violence; ii) any changes in violent behaviours and prevailing attitudes and beliefs about violence; and iii) broader social and gender norms that influence violent behaviours.

Qualitative methods are recommended for the design of formative research, including use of vignettes.[8]

Conduct formative research in targeted settings/communities to:

- Confirm whether the specific form of violence is a **direct norm, and which indirect norms are relevant**. Be specific about which form/s of violence are the focus of planned interventions and which indirect norms support them. *For example, for sexual harassment on public transport, indirect norms may be around male sexual entitlement; for IPV among vulnerable and marginalized groups, norms around male dominance may be exacerbated by socio-economic stressors; and for sexual violence impacting women outside the home, indirect norms around women's mobility may be relevant.*

- Determine which norms are most influential, and therefore which to **prioritize** in GBV prevention programmes. Formative research can help identify which social and gender norms are most powerful, influential and "sticky" (hard to change), such as norms around sexuality, and which norms are already beginning to shift and thus may be easier to change, such as norms around help-seeking.

- Identify **positive, protective norms**, which may exist in some contexts: *for example, individual beliefs or attitudes that physical violence is unacceptable or parents' desire to protect their children from harm.* These potential leverage points can add valuable insights to programme design.

- Identify the **reference groups** for specific norms. *For example, for IPV this may be men and women in intimate partner relationships, extended family members, police and justice systems, and service providers.*

- Understand **sanctions** (consequences) for non-compliance, which is also important to inform programme design. *For example for IPV, sanctions may include pressuring women who disclose violence to return to, or remain with, the perpetrator.*

Analysing gender and power dynamics

Understanding gender and power dynamics is central to GBV prevention and response frameworks. It is recommended to undertake a dedicated gender and power analysis to inform intervention design, including to determine how gendered inequalities, power dynamics and other forms of inequality and discrimination–such as disability, age, ethnicity, migrant/refugee status, caste and socio-economic status–intersect with specific form/s of violence and the priority norms that support violent behaviour. The analysis should also examine how gender roles and gender inequalities, as well as other forms of inequality, exclusion and discrimination, impact access to services, resources, opportunities and decision-making. It is also important to understand who has a vested interest in maintaining harmful/inequitable norms that support violence (and why), and who has the power to impose sanctions for non-compliance with the norms that support violence. For more on gender and power analysis, see Module 5 of UNFPA's forthcoming global **Toolkit on Transforming Gender and Social Norms**.

8 Formative research should focus on exploring gender and social norms. Vignettes are hypothetical stories that place an invented character in a specific context, with guiding questions that enable structured responses, to explore perceptions of specific behaviours and how they would be perceived in research participants' own communities or reference groups.

Engage the powerholders in norm change programming

Efforts to change harmful social and gender norms are most effective when they engage all stakeholders in the community or reference group, including those who are directly impacted by harmful norms and those who shape and reinforce them. *For example, interventions to address harmful practices affecting girls and young women are less effective and may even cause harm if they do not also involve the powerholders who influence adherence to the practice, such as parents, other family members and communities.* Similarly, while GBV prevention and response programmes must continue to primarily engage women and girls, including to help reduce acceptance of violence and encourage disclosure and help-seeking, **engaging women and girls alone is not sufficient** to reduce perpetration of violence and may inadvertently reinforce norms that place responsibility for violence on women and girls. A social and gender norms change approach underscores the importance of engaging men and boys including to challenge harmful norms of masculinity, male dominance in the family, and the acceptability of men's use of violence in intimate relationships. Male engagement can also help prevent and respond to backlash. Formative research will help identify who in the reference group/s have greater (relative) power to change violent behaviour. Social and gender norm change approaches can add value by involving these powerholders in programme initiatives, which can help strengthen programme impact.

2. Determine programme implementation strategies

Determine programming approach to social and gender norm change based on formative research.

This can be done by:[9]

First, locating where the norm occurs (e.g. community-level vs. society-wide) and the strength of the norm. For example:

a. Where **norms are specific to a particular setting/community**, community engagement approaches should be prioritized. *For example, contexts where IPV or sexual violence is prevalent within migrant communities or among internally displaced persons.*

b. If norms are **widely held across population groups or society**, mass media/awareness raising can complement community-based interventions. *For example, contexts where studies show that physical or sexual IPV is widely accepted across the population.*

c. In settings where **individual attitudes largely align with harmful social and gender norms**, interventions can target attitude and norm change by combining awareness-raising and community-based norm change interventions. *For example, if surveys show that most people think it is acceptable for men to use violence in their relationships.*

d. If **individual attitudes diverge from the norm**, but most people comply because they believe others expect them to, engage communities in norm questioning to highlight this divergence. *For example, if some men don't see violence as acceptable but believe if they don't control their wife and children, their family and other men will criticize or exclude them.*

e. If most people assume others are complying with the norm when in fact they are not–called **"pluralistic ignorance"**–raise awareness that prevalence is lower than people think or is falling, making it visible that others are changing their behaviour. *For example, if many people believe most men use violence in their relationships, but in fact they do not.*

9 This is a high-level overview of norm-change programme considerations and possibilities, not a comprehensive or prescriptive guide.

f. Formative research may also show that some people don't follow the norm: they are **"positive deviants."** These individuals can serve as examples and/or champions, inspiring and encouraging others to do the same. Even in very high-prevalence settings there are some men who do not use violence in their relationships.

g. If research identifies that **sanctions** are weak or inconsistently applied, this can also be a lever for awareness raising. *For example, if women who leave violent relationships are not judged or pressured to return to their partner, or men who don't use violence in their relationships are not seen as less masculine/dominant.*

h. However, if sanctions and punishments remain strong/punitive, interventions can focus on weakening consequences for non-compliance. *For example, this may include providing support to women who disclose violence or seek help, or fostering positive reinforcement among peer groups for men who reduce or stop using violence.*

Then, selecting specific programming approaches based on the considerations above. For example:

i. **Community-led, community-based approaches** have proven effective in changing harmful social and gender norms that support violence and in reducing its prevalence. Strong facilitation of community-based norm change efforts is critical: engaging and training local facilitators is often an effective strategy.[v] Sustained, intense interventions that engage communities over time (18 months to three years) are more effective than short-term or one-off initiatives. The timing required will depend on the readiness of the community. Norms may also shift more quickly due to external circumstances, *for example availability of infrastructure such as roads, health facilities or schools.* Norm change interventions should be embedded in a comprehensive approach to GBV prevention and response, which includes legal support and access to services for victims and survivors.

j. Programming with communities should **engage all key actors in reference groups** for priority norms, including adult men and women, young people, extended family members, community and religious leaders, and justice, health and GBV service providers. In line with a "do no harm" approach, community engagement and empowerment interventions should not focus only on women and girls without also engaging those with greater (relative) power.

k. For the sustainability and effectiveness of community interventions, it is critical to address **specific gender norms** that support different forms of violence–including those that are based in unequal power relations– rather than a broad range of gender norms around men and women's roles and ideologies of masculinity and femininity alone. *For example, norms around men's perceived need to exert dominance and control based on gender privilege are strongly correlated with perpetration of IPV.*[v]

l. **Edutainment and mass and social media awareness campaigns**, tailored to specific settings and contexts and tested with stakeholders and communities, can complement community-based interventions, especially in settings where indirect norms that support violence are widely held and individual attitudes support the norm. However, raising awareness that a practice such as IPV is widespread can inadvertently reinforce the norm–specifically the descriptive norm: *the belief that violence is common or typical*. Data on prevalence is important to engage policy makers and service providers, especially where the practice has previously been hidden or secret. But public awareness messaging for the general community should highlight the proportion of people who **do not use violence in their relationships**, stories of positive deviance, and any evidence that GBV prevalence is decreasing.

3. Monitoring

Throughout implementation, undertake continuous monitoring of social and gender norm change programming to track changes in norms that support violence, attitudes and prevalence. This can include monitoring shifts in:

- **Behaviour**, *for example decreased incidence of specific forms of violence, such as physical violence;*
- Individual **attitudes**, *for example a reduction in the proportion of people in the community/setting who see violence as acceptable or justified;*
- **Indirect norms that support violence**, *for example less acceptance of norms around male dominance and control or norms that prevent disclosure and help-seeking; and*
- **Sanctions**, *for example a reduction in stigma and discrimination against women who leave violent relationships.*

Monitoring is also critical to track and respond to **resistance** to norm change initiatives as well as **backlash** against GBV prevention programming and/or norm change interventions. *For example, there may be an increase in controlling behaviour, violence or threats of violence in response to awareness raising or community engagement initiatives.* Monitoring can also identify other **unintended consequences** and potential harms, *for example in some settings, mass media campaigns may provoke perpetrators and put women at greater risk.* And, monitoring can support **adaptation and learning** to improve programme outcomes.

Monitoring methods might include tracking of activities and participation, as well as direct observation of change in communities *(for example, on a monthly basis)*. It can also involve key informant interviews and focus groups with participating communities. Additionally, monitoring may cover changes in local institutions and policies *(for example, on a quarterly or bi-annual basis)*, depending on the length and intensity of the programme.

4. Measurement

Using existing data

Data and evidence to monitor **behaviour**–such as prevalence of partner and non-partner violence, and geographical and socio-economic variations–is now available for most countries in Asia-Pacific through dedicated violence against women prevalence surveys and the DHS and MICS. These surveys also provide data on individual **attitudes** towards violence, in particular IPV, and disclosure of violence and help-seeking. However, while some surveys do include men's attitudes questions, nationally representative data on men's use of violence is not available.[10] The World Values Survey[11] provides data for 13 countries in the region on both men and women's gender attitudes, including towards women in leadership and women's participation in education and employment, as well as acceptability of premarital sex and abortion.

10 While the UN multi-country survey on men's use of violence did collect this data, the sample was not nationally representative in the countries where the study was conducted.

11 World Values Survey data is available for the following countries: Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. Not all countries have data for all gender-attitude related questions.

Data on prevalence and attitudes can sometimes be used as a **proxy for norm change**: *for example, where there are declines in both prevalence and attitudes supportive of violence, norms may be shifting*. However, because violence is complex and driven by multiple, intersecting factors, the relative influence of social and gender norms on specific violent behaviours may vary. Social and gender norms are almost always part of the broader context and should be considered as a factor, but other structural and individual-level drivers—such as poverty, conflict or personal histories of violence—may also play a significant role. Dedicated studies can help clarify the extent to which norms influence behaviour in a given setting and whether norm change interventions will add value to GBV prevention programming for specific forms of violence. Where harmful social and gender norms are a significant factor, intervention research is essential to collect data on descriptive and injunctive norms and sanctions, and to assess how norm change interventions are impacting behaviours.

Generating new data

Where social and gender norm change interventions are included in GBV prevention programming, measurement is essential. Along with flagging necessary adjustments to improve programme outcomes, measurement also shows how other GBV prevention and response interventions affect the specific norms that support violence. Measurement also contributes to the GBV and norm change evidence base by deepening understanding of how norm change happens.

While randomized controlled trials are considered the "gold standard" of impact evaluation research, often resources are not available to support these studies. Other approaches can be used such as mixed-methods studies. Formative/baseline and endline research should be conducted to assess changes in violent behaviour, attitudes, social and gender norms that support violence, and sanctions that sustain it. Sometimes norms change but behaviours remain in place, and sometimes prevalence declines but the norms that support violence remain strong, which means there is a risk that violence may increase, *for example when shocks or crises occur.*

Several tools and frameworks are available to measure the social and gender norms that support different forms of violence, such as IPV. *For example, the RESPECT Monitoring and Evaluation Framework includes measures of social and gender norm change. The Gender Empowerment Measures Repository (EMERGE) provides guidance and tools to measure attitudes and norms that support different forms of violence, including IPV. The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) and the Gender Equitable Men Scale (GEMS) measure men's gender attitudes, including in relation to violence. The ACT Framework includes measures of social and gender norms that support female genital mutilation; this can be adapted for other forms of violence and harmful practices.*

Selected resources

Social and gender norms that support violence

Evidence base

Transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms. RESPECT: Preventing Violence against Women Strategy Summary – **UN Women and Social Development Direct** (2020)

Piecing Together the Evidence on Social Norms and Violence Against Women – **The Equality Institute** (2017)

What Works Evidence Review: Social norms and violence against women and girls – **What Works** (2017)

GBV prevention norm change programming

Transforming Gender Norms for Violence Prevention: The What, Why, and How – **Prevention Collaborative** (2023)

SASA! Together – **Raising Voices** (2024)

Measurement

Measuring Gender and Social Norms – **EMERGE** (2023)

International Men and Gender Equality Survey – **Equimundo** (2024)
GEMS – **Equimundo** (2013)

Resources for Measuring Social Norms: A Practical Guide for Program Implementers – **Social Norms Learning Collaborative** (2019)

The ACT Framework – **UNICEF and UNFPA** (2020)

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viii. Bedford K, Brosio M. *Measuring Social Norms for Gender and Development: Lessons and Priorities*.; UN Women. 2024.

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