

SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS TIP SHEETS

Changing Norms to Address Gender-based Violence and Harmful Practices

Annotated Bibliography

Annotated Bibliography

In 2024, UNFPA APRO commissioned a mapping of resources on social and gender norms and norm change related to gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices, specifically early and child marriage (ECM) and female genital mutilation (FGM). The purpose of the mapping was to inform country office programming on social and gender norm change to address GBV, ECM and FGM and to help contextualize UNFPA's forthcoming global **Toolkit on Transforming Gender and Social Norms**.

This annotated bibliography includes resources identified during the mapping exercise that were available as of June 2025.

What's Included

Resources included in this annotated bibliography fall into the following broad categories:

- **Training and Capacity Development.** Examples include online training courses and training manuals and facilitation guides, such as UNICEF's online Social Norms Programming and Measurement course, the Prevention Collaborative's *Transforming Gender Norms for Violence Prevention*, and UNICEF and UNFPA's *Manual on Social Norms Change*.
- **Guidance on Programming and Measurement.** Examples include guidance on social and gender norm programme design, implementation and monitoring, such as UNICEF's *Everyone Wants to Belong* and CARE's Tipping Point. On measurement of social norms, examples include UNICEF's ACT Framework and ODI ALIGN resources.
- **Evidence Base for Effectiveness.** This includes evidence reviews on the effectiveness of norm change interventions for ending GBV, ECM and FGM, and evidence for what works to prevent GBV. Evaluations of selected intervention programmes are also included, for example for UNICEF's Saleema (FGM) and CARE's Tipping Point (ECM).
- **Technical and Conceptual Framing.** A final set of resources includes syntheses and critical perspectives on social and gender norms approaches, such as UN Women's *Social Norms, Gender and Development*. Also included are reflections on social and gender norm theory and practice, such as papers by London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine's Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-related Harmful Practices.

Resources in the annotated bibliography are categorized by type and by keywords, as follows:

Resource Type

- Training manual
- Guidance
- Presentation
- Tipsheet/briefing note
- Online training
- Learning/implementation package
- Evidence base/evaluation
- Sample questionnaire
- Technical paper
- Programme

Keywords

- Social norms
- Gender norms
- GBV prevention
- FGM
- Child marriage
- Evidence base
- Measurement
- Social and behaviour change (SBC)
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
- Analysis
- Programming

Annotated Bibliography

Alexander-Scott, M. Bell, E. and Holden, J. (2016). *Shifting Social Norms to Tackle Violence against Women*. London, DFID Violence against Women and Girls Helpdesk

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, GBV prevention, Evidence base

This guidance document highlights that there is limited evidence on what works to tackle social norms underpinning violence against women. At the time it was written, very few programmes had used social norm theory to guide programme development, and there was a lack of consensus on how to measure social norm change. Social norms can hinder change, and this helps to explain why interventions primarily addressing material and individual factors sometimes fail to impact prevalence. Violent behaviour may be held in place by a direct social norm that a specific behaviour is common and expected (a descriptive and injunctive norm, respectively) but may also be held in place by indirect norms that reinforce violence, many of which are gender norms. Violence is often a part of dominant constructions of masculinity which include social expectations that men control women, and that physical and sexual force are legitimate ways to exert this control. This control extends to punishment and sanctions against those who resist and transgress gender norms. Emerging evidence on interventions suggests effectiveness is strengthened when **gender norms** are addressed as part of an overall approach. Interventions that include both men and women are more effective. The guidance highlights the importance of identifying whether a behaviour is a direct norm and/or is held in place by indirect social norms. This involves measuring whether the behaviour is perceived as typical and expected; who the reference group is; what the consequences are for deviating from the norm; and whether most people would still act this way if others disagreed. High prevalence rates in specific locations or among sub-groups may indicate that specific reference groups are influencing that behaviour. This resource provides a framework for programme design: change social expectations within the reference group; publicise these changes; and catalyse and reinforce new norms and behaviours. The resource includes a set of questions to measure social norms that support intimate partner violence (IPV).

Bedford, K. and Brosio, M. (2024). *Measuring Social Norms for Gender and Development: Lessons and Priorities*. New York, UN Women

Resource Type: Technical paper

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Measurement, Programming

This discussion paper provides a critical assessment of how social norms are currently being measured in gender and development initiatives. The authors analyse seven examples from major organizations—including the OECD, UNDP, World Bank and UN-Women—to evaluate the approaches used to measure social norms related to gender equality. The analysis reveals four significant cross-cutting shortcomings: i) inconsistencies in how social norms are defined and measured within studies; ii) unclear causal pathways connecting norms to gender equality outcomes; iii) poorly evidenced recommendations, particularly regarding legal reform and the role of the private sector; and iv) failure to adequately consider the role of collective action and feminist movements, as well as contentious politics in social norm change. To address these limitations, the paper proposes two key approaches. First, improve the internal consistency of norm change measures so indicators align with definitions of social norms and gender norms, and theories of how norms change. Second: i) strengthen use of emerging best practices through long-term, participatory approaches that measure actual gender equality outcomes rather than just changes in attitudes or formal laws (as proxies for norm and behaviour change); and ii) address how institutions and private sector actors impact norm change. For example, social media may have both positive and negative impacts on gender norms, and institutional shifts—such as access to care services, availability of infrastructure, or taxation policies—may also impact social and gender norms in ways that need to be included in norm change measurement.

CARE, Emory University, & icddr, b. (2022). *Care Tipping Point: Understanding the Impact of Addressing Root Causes of Child Marriage*

Resource Type: Evidence base

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Child marriage, Evidence base, Programming

The Tipping Point programme, implemented in Bangladesh and Nepal, aimed to shift norms that drive child marriage through interventions that built girls' agency, engaged communities and promoted norm change. The programme used two approaches: a core package of sessions focused on knowledge and attitudes; and an enhanced approach, called TPP+, that included activist training and intergenerational dialogues to promote norm change. The programme measured the existence and strength of norms related to girls' participation in decision-making, mobility and engagement in collective action. The evaluation found significant reductions in child marriage in Bangladesh, with positive change in norms around decision-making and mobility in both countries. However, economic challenges remained a significant factor in child marriage, highlighting the need for broader socioeconomic support, especially for the most vulnerable girls and their families.

CARE. (2020). *Tipping Point: Social Norms Design Checklist, Social Norms Data Use Tool*. Atlanta, CARE

Resource Type: Learning/implementation package

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Measurement, Analysis, Programming, SBC

CARE's resources from the Tipping Point initiative build on the organization's Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP) framework and implementation learning. The Social Norms Data Use Tool provides guidance on how to identify "cracks" in social norms that can be leveraged in programming and social and behaviour change interventions. Priority should be given to targeting weak or changing norms that significantly impact behaviour, where sanctions are not imposed or not consistently imposed, or where there are exceptions to the norm (positive deviance). The

Social Norms Design Checklist is intended for use in programme design and implementation. It recommends to: i) find early adopters and support them (identify positive deviants who are less sensitive to sanctions); ii) map allies and ask for their support (key influencers and networks); iii) create safe spaces for dialogues to promote community engagement and mobilization; iv) use future-oriented positive messaging to avoid reinforcing existing harmful norms and behaviours; and v) encourage bystander action and normalize positive change.

CARE. (2018). *Social Analysis and Action: Global Implementation Manual*. Atlanta, CARE

Resource Type: Learning/implementation package

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Analysis

This CARE manual frames social and gender norm change in the wider context of gender-transformative change. The package includes an implementation manual on transforming gender, power and social norms, resources for staff, and guidance on monitoring and evaluation. CARE's approach is focused on gender transformation, addressing sexuality as a cross-cutting issue, transformation of programme implementers, and community-led change. Key steps include transforming staff capacities; facilitating reflection with communities, including undertaking a gender and power analysis; community-led action planning; implementation; and monitoring and evaluation. The manual includes practical tools to surface and explore gender and power norms, map community networks and influences, and prioritize social norms to be addressed in programming.

CARE. (2017). *Applying theory to practice: CARE's journey piloting social norms measures for gender programming*. Atlanta, CARE

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Measurement, Analysis

Part of CARE's suite of resources on social norm change, SNAP provides a framework for analysing social and gender norms and measuring norm change. CARE adapted the same scholarship that informs UNICEF's SBC work, but with an explicit focus on gender equality and gender transformation, recognizing that social norms are one influence on behaviour, and intersect with structural forces and material realities. CARE uses social norm theory to help understand why even when individual attitudes and beliefs change, some behaviours continue. CARE recommends undertaking formative research to understand the social norms associated with a behaviour, whether these norms are changing, the sanctions for non-compliance, and the reference groups for specific norms. Specific questions are provided for baseline and endline surveys to diagnose descriptive and injunctive norms.

Cislaghi, B., and Heise, L. (2020). *Gender norms and social norms: differences, similarities and why they matter in prevention science*. *Sociology of Health and Illness* 42(2)

Resource Type: Technical paper

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms

This technical paper distinguishes social norms approaches in the global health sector from efforts led by women's activism and social movements to address inequitable gender norms. The paper highlights the need for a common understanding and language, whereby social norms approaches integrate an understanding of gendered power dynamics and relations, and gender specialists draw on social norms tools to shift behaviours within broader multisectoral interventions. It discusses how social norms are collective beliefs that exist within a reference group, while gender norms are part of the "gender system" and reflect and reinforce power dynamics and institutional practices that disadvantage women and girls. Critically, social norms are understood as "within

the mind” while gender norms exist “in the real world” and are internalized and enforced by power holders who benefit from women and girls’ compliance. Social norms approaches focus on changing beliefs within a reference group, while gender norm change requires shifts in institutions, practices and power dynamics as well as in individual beliefs and behaviours.

Cislaghi, B., and Heise, L. (2018). *Theory and Practice of Social Norms Interventions: Eight Common Pitfalls*. *Global Health* 14, 83

Resource Type: Technical paper

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms

This paper discusses eight pitfalls of social norms approaches in the health sector, emphasizing the importance of different frameworks for understanding health-related behaviours, such as the socioecological model and social determinants of health. It notes that early social norm change interventions focused on behaviour change on university campuses, targeting alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use, and sexual violence. In the 1990s, practitioners in low- and middle-income countries began exploring norm change to address harmful traditional practices like FGM. Social norms approaches were also used to address child marriage and IPV. The push for social norms approaches stems from recognizing that awareness-raising and economic incentives alone don’t change behaviour. The paper provides an overview of social norm theory, highlighting its cross-disciplinary nature and noting that different approaches are sometimes contradictory. The eight pitfalls outlined are:

- Conflating norms and attitudes, as individual attitudes may differ from the norm.
- Conversely, only focusing on discordant (conflicting) norms and attitudes; while this is important, norms and attitudes may also converge, in which case attitude change is also required.
- Overlooking protective norms, which should be reinforced.
- Assuming social norms are the sole driver of a practice, which is often not the case.
- Confusing prevalence of a norm with its influence, as prevalence may not always be visible or measurable.
- Neglecting indirect influence of social norms that may keep a practice in place.
- Publicizing the wide prevalence of a norm or behaviour, as this may reinforce the practice.
- Engineering social norm change from the “outside in,” which can result in backlash.

Cislaghi, B. and Heise, L. (2016). *Measuring Gender-related Social Norms*. *Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-based Violence of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine*.

Resource Type: Technical paper

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Measurement, GBV, FGM, Child marriage

This technical paper focuses on measuring the social norms that sustain GBV. It emphasises that using social norms approaches to change discriminatory gender practices only works if other factors apart from norms are considered. Norm change must be part of a comprehensive strategy to transform harmful behaviours. It underscores the importance of qualitative methods in designing interventions and collecting and analysing data at the level of the reference group. Simple methods include measuring changes in perceptions of sanctions and their severity. Approaches used for FGM cannot be simply applied for GBV, because FGM as a practice is directly related to the norm, whereas while IPV may be common, it may not be a social norm. Social norm theory is helpful because harmful behaviours such as IPV may be held in place by a matrix of norms, such as family privacy and tolerance of violence. Programmes can aim to form new positive norms and to address other factors driving behaviour.

Cislaghi, B., Manji, K. and Heise, L. (2018). Social Norms and Gender-related Harmful Practices. Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-related Harmful Practices, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

Resource Type: Technical paper

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, FGM, Child marriage, GBV

This paper aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice by adapting social norm theory into practical guidance for development practitioners. While there isn't a harmonized definition of norms, a focus on descriptive and injunctive norms is important for designing and evaluating interventions. Social norms can't be viewed in isolation; they must be understood in context. Understanding the strength of the norm, as well as the extent to which there is deviance from the norm, is important for leveraging norm change. Gender norms approaches are important because social norms approaches overlook how power structures social relations, the role of socialization, and the fact that norms can be embedded in institutions. The paper highlights the importance of addressing indirect norms; for example, IPV may not itself be a social norm, but the norm that family conflict is a private matter may indirectly reinforce this behaviour, in certain contexts. The paper notes that sometimes people will reinforce or tighten a norm to preserve identity in the face of external shocks or threats. It emphasizes the importance of community-led norm change processes and notes that financial incentives that change behaviour without changing the underlying norm may be ineffective in the long term.

Cookson, T.P., L. Fuentes, M.K. Kuss, and J. Bitterly. (2023). Social Norms, Gender and Development: A Review of Research and Practice. New York, UN Women

Resource Type: Technical paper

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Evidence base

This comprehensive review by UN Women provides insights into the conceptual and practical aspects of social and gender norm programming. It outlines key debates on individual versus societal approaches to social norms and gender norms, emphasizing that norms are embedded in institutions and practices as well as in people's beliefs. The paper highlights that most evaluated norm change interventions use edutainment, economic incentives and community engagement: of these, community engagement, including community dialogue, is most effective. However, norm change often results from a combination of factors, including legislative reform, economic and labour market changes, shifts in religious systems, practices and teachings, changes in infrastructure and resources, and shocks and crises. It highlights that as behaviour change is often the desired outcome, measuring changes in social norms is not sufficient, as material outcomes may also shift norms. At the same time, behaviour changes influenced by material conditions may not persist if underlying norms remain unchanged. Social norm change is not always the key intervention to change behaviour, and the full range of drivers and levers should always be considered.

Davin, C. (2021). Getting Practical: Integrating Social Norms into Social and Behaviour Change Programs. Social Norms Learning Collaborative, Breakthrough ACTION, Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, SBC, SRHR

This toolkit developed by the Learning Collaborative is designed for use with SRHR and family planning programmes. Intended for workshop settings, it provides a structured approach to programme design based on social norms analysis. It includes steps for understanding norms using formative research, community consultation, programme design and monitoring. It highlights the importance of identifying specific behaviours

and associated norms to change, as well as working with communities to develop and validate strategies to address these norms. The resource features a decision tree for how to approach norm change and tools for assessing likelihood of resistance to change.

Emerge: Gender Empowerment Measures Repository (2020). *Social Norms: Gender and Social Norms Modules*. Center on Gender Equity and Health, UC San Diego School of Medicine

Resource Type: Sample questionnaires

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Measurement, GBV, SRHR

This website provides a set of questionnaire modules for measuring social norms and gender roles, with specific sections focused on GBV and SRHR. It serves as a useful reference when designing surveys for gender and social norm analysis and measurement, offering adaptable modules that can be customized as needed.

Evans, W. Douglas, et al. (2020). *The Saleema initiative in Sudan to abandon female genital mutilation: Outcomes and dose response effects*. PLoS ONE 14(3)

Resource Type: Evidence base

Keywords: Social norms, FGM, Programming

This is an evaluation of the Saleema initiative, which aimed to reduce FGM by promoting positive terminology and increasing acceptance of uncut girls. The programme focused on changing FGM as a social norm to reduce prevalence of the practice. Interventions included public pledges and community dialogues, as well as pledges not to cut newborn daughters, and measuring changes in the norm through survey research. The initiative demonstrated success in reducing social norms supporting FGM, although it did not specifically measure changes in prevalence.

Greene, M., Edmeades, J., & Siddiqi, M. (2024). *Scope, range and effectiveness of interventions to address social norms to prevent and delay child marriage and empower adolescent girls: A systematic review*. BMJ Open 2024;14

Resource Type: Evidence base

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Child marriage, Evidence base

This evidence review finds limited evidence of a systemic relationship between interventions aiming to change social norms related to marriage, and changes in child marriage outcomes, though some programmes have demonstrated effectiveness in changing prevalence. The authors discuss the complexities surrounding norms related to child marriage, such as gender roles and expectations, and safety concerns for girls. As norm change interventions focus on a broad range of norms, there is a lack of consensus about which norms matter for child marriage and how best to measure effectiveness of norm change initiatives. Economic interventions that promote economic opportunities and participation have shown potential to delay marriage and some do impact norms, but often economic incentives (such as cash transfers) do not shift underlying norms. The study emphasizes the need for consistent norm change measurement strategies and deeper exploration of which norms significantly impact child marriage.

Greene, M.E. and Stiefvater, E. (2019). *Social and Gender Norms and Child Marriage: A Reflection on Issues, Evidence, and Areas of Inquiry in the Field*. London, ALIGN

Resource Type: Technical paper

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Child marriage

This literature review underscores that child marriage is rooted in a complex interplay of gender and social norms. It highlights that approaches focusing on gender norms emphasize unequal gender and power relations, whereas social norms approaches often treat everyone as having equal power, as if everyone is on a “level playing field.” Given that gender hierarchies underpin marriage as an institution, understanding gender norms is crucial to changing this practice. The review emphasizes that child marriage is not a norm in itself but is influenced by both gender and social norms. Key norms supporting the practice include the centrality of marriage, the importance of virginity for women and girls, and the expectation that children will obey their parents and elders. Additionally, structural economic factors incentivize families to engage in child marriage. Legal reforms alone are insufficient to shift norms when other factors continue to support the practice. In contexts where social norms favouring child marriage are strong, law reform is less likely to be effective. Critical norms include those related to sexuality and sexual behaviour, the stigma of divorce, women’s inability to leave marriages, and lower levels of decision-making power within marriage. It is not enough to merely delay marriage; changing social constructions of marriage and gender roles within the household is also necessary. Indicators of norm change may include reduced sensitivity to sanctions, girls having greater say in the timing of marriage or choice of partner, married girls having more say in household and marital decision-making, and changes in who decides if a girl must marry if she becomes pregnant. Further research is needed to understand social norms affecting married girls. Efforts to change norms must ensure a “do no harm” approach that does not increase vulnerability for adolescent girls.

Harper, C., Marcus, R., George, R., D’Angelo, S. and Samman, E. (2020). *Gender, Power and Progress: How Norms Change*. London, ALIGN/ODI

Resource Type: Evidence base

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, GBV prevention

This flagship report frames gender norms within power dynamics and identifies four key sites of gender norm change: education, SRHR, women’s paid and unpaid work, and women’s voice and political representation. The report underscores that norms are slow to change, are embedded and normalized through institutions and power relations, and are often contested and resisted. It highlights key enablers of norm change, including legislation, access to services and infrastructure, education, community mobilization and social movements, mass and social media, awareness- and behaviour-change programming, and financial incentives. Norms around IPV, control of women and girls’ sexuality, and women’s role in unpaid domestic and care work are particularly sticky and hard to change. Change requires shifting harmful gender norms alongside change in practices and institutions. Reversals and setbacks occur, including because of crises and shocks, backlash, and the rise of conservative and populist movements. The report sets out key principles for norm change and emphasizes that sustained, inclusive and evidence-based efforts are needed for meaningful progress.

Heise, L., & Stern, E. (2024). Women's Economic Empowerment and Intimate Partner Violence: Untangling the Intersections. Prevention Collaborative

Resource Type: Tipsheet/briefing note

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, GBV prevention, Evidence base

This evidence brief explores the relationship between women's economic empowerment interventions and the risk of IPV. It highlights that if interventions violate social norms about women's roles or the acceptability of IPV, they might inadvertently increase the risk of violence. However, in settings where women's employment is more common and accepted, economic participation can serve as a protective factor. The brief notes that economic interventions like microfinance and cash transfers, combined with gender training, are more effective in reducing IPV than standalone economic interventions. Unconditional cash transfers are shown to be more effective than conditional ones. For successful implementation, careful design and contextual understanding of prevailing norms around women's work and potential backlash are necessary.

Institute for Reproductive Health (2020). Social Norms Exploration Tool. Washington DC, Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Measurement, Analysis, SBC

Developed under USAID's "Passages" project, the Social Norms Exploration Tool (SNET) is designed for analysing social norms for SBC initiatives. It uses a rapid assessment approach to social norms analysis, including problem tree analysis, to identify factors such as norms that influence targeted behaviours. It provides guidance for identifying target audiences and conducting community-based research to identify relevant norms and reference groups. This information can be used to inform programme design and adjust programming as needed during implementation.

Jewkes, R. (2017). What Works Evidence Review: Social Norms and Violence against Women and Girls. What Works to Prevent Violence

Resource Type: Evidence base

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, GBV prevention

This briefing note reviews the evidence base for social norm interventions to end violence against women and girls (VAWG). It clusters norms supporting violence into two categories: those related to the acceptability of violence, and those that uphold gendered power hierarchies. It highlights that VAWG is used as a punishment (sanction) when women and girls step outside gender norms and roles. It emphasises the importance of understanding how social norms of masculinity relate to VAWG. For example, in settings where masculinities emphasize men's control and dominance, they may be expected to use violence to reinforce this norm. In other settings, violent forms of masculinities may not be respected, but "milder" masculinities may still be based on norms of entitlement and control. Measurement needs to distinguish how acceptable different forms of violence are, as well as individual attitudes versus perceptions of community attitudes: where these are congruent there may be limited space to deviate from the norm. Successful interventions are multi-component, as attitudes and social norms are more likely to change when other dynamics in the environment support this. Community-based interventions that are participatory and explicitly address gender norms are more likely to be effective, while mass media interventions on their own are not effective.

Kenny, L., Cislaghi, B. et. al. (2019). Addressing Social Norms at the VAW/VAC Intersection. Learning Group on Social Norms and Gender-related Harmful Practices Convened by the Gender, Violence and Health Centre (GVHC) of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)

Resource Type: Technical paper

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, GBV prevention

This paper discusses common social norms that support and reinforce VAW and violence against children (VAC), including norms that discourage reporting of violence, increase acceptance and use of violence, and limit intervention. It details two areas of tension between the VAW and VAC fields, namely around women's use of violence and children's use of violence against other adults and children. Furthermore, there are tensions around different views of adolescent agency and sexuality. The VAW and VAC fields also reinforce certain understandings about young people's agency and men as perpetrators of violence that need to be critically examined.

Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change. (2019). Resources for Measuring Social Norms: A Practical Guide for Program Implementers. Washington DC, Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Measurement, Analysis

Social norm measurement sets out to understand descriptive and injunctive norms, reference groups for specific norms and behaviours, and outcome expectations—rewards or punishments for non-compliance. This resource highlights that while social norm change approaches aim to shift collective norms at the community and societal levels, what is often measured is individual perceptions of norms. It outlines four steps for measuring social norms: i) exploring which norms are important for a specific behaviour using existing evidence and formative research; ii) defining relevant norms to conceptualize their influence on behaviour and how the programme will address and measure them; iii) selecting measurement approaches and tools; and iv) using the data generated to adapt and modify programme strategies. The resource highlights the importance of formative research and qualitative methods to understand social norms and provides sample questions for measuring descriptive and injunctive norms.

Marcus, R. (2021). Data, Tools and Measurement: Guide to Recent Resources. ALIGN

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Measurement

This ALIGN resource provides a comprehensive guide to the measurement of social and gender norms, covering data and indicators, qualitative and quantitative methods, and monitoring and evaluation of norm change interventions. It highlights the importance of qualitative research to establish the existence of norms driving specific practices. Proxy indicators can support measurement of norms by indicating the presence of social norms and monitoring shifts in norms over time. It notes that “light touch” approaches to norm change measurement are preferred because they are more responsive, less time-consuming and less expensive. The resource links to qualitative tools and methods as well as survey modules, secondary data sources for proxy indicators, resources for monitoring and evaluation, and examples of how big data can be used to measure norm change.

Matanda, D., Groce-Galis, M., Gay, J., and Hardee, K. (2021). Effectiveness of Interventions Designed to Prevent or Respond to Female Genital Mutilation: A Review of Evidence. UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and Population Council, Kenya

Resource Type: Evidence base

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, FGM, Evidence base, Programming

An evidence review of FGM programmes found that interventions implemented in communities tended to focus on social rather than gender norm change (changing the direct FGM norm rather than the underlying gender norms that support the practice). Community engagement, and social media and marketing efforts, were found to be effective in changing the direct FGM norm. Multi-sectoral approaches—incorporating awareness-raising, social dialogue and public declarations—are more effective in changing underlying norms that support the practice. The review emphasizes that information, education and awareness campaigns alone are insufficient for behavioural change.

Matanda, D.J., Van Eekert, N., Croce-Galis, M., Gay, J., Middelburg, M.J., & Hardee, K. (2023). What interventions are effective to prevent or respond to female genital mutilation? A review of existing evidence from 2008–2020. PLOS Global Public Health 3(5)

Resource Type: Evidence base

Keywords: FGM, Programming, Evidence base

This evidence review commissioned by UNICEF and WHO reviews effective interventions for preventing and responding to FGM. It finds that legislative interventions are promising in changing norms, attitudes and behaviours when combined with other measures and contextualized to local settings. Legislative reform is more effective when norms are already changing, to reinforce abandonment of the practice. Community engagement, including community dialogues and conversations, are effective as part of a holistic approach that seeks to empower community members. Engagement of religious leaders and media campaigns are identified as effective approaches in changing social norms, though standalone information and awareness campaigns often fail to change behaviour. Education of mothers is correlated with lower levels of FGM among their daughters. The study also notes risks such as medicalization of the practice, and greater secrecy if legislation is not accompanied by broader supportive measures.

Michau, L., and Namy S. (2021). SASA! Together: An evolution of the SASA! approach to prevent violence against women. Evaluation and Program Planning, Volume 86

Resource Type: Evidence base

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, GBV prevention, Evidence base, Programming

SASA! Together is a VAW prevention programme that expands on the original SASA! model, emphasizing community-driven approaches to shift power dynamics and reduce IPV. The approach is based on the “stages of change”: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation for action, action and maintenance. The four “stages of change” include i) undertaking formative research and facilitator training; ii) introducing a feminist analysis of power as a root cause of IPV; iii) building community engagement to support women experiencing violence and hold perpetrators accountable; and iv) formalizing mechanisms to sustain new norms that reject violence and encourage more equal power relations between men and women. SASA! Together builds on diffusion of innovation and social norm change theory to create change across the socioecological model through three key strategies: local activism, community leadership and institutional strengthening. The programme runs

over three years with at least weekly engagement. It addresses power dynamics around sex and sexuality, recognizing that women's sexual agency is fundamental to more equal power relations between men and women. The programme highlights the importance of community engagement, quality facilitation and sustained programming for impactful norm change.

ODI and UNFPA. (2022). *Guidance Note: Integrating the Gender and Social Norms Output into Country Programme Documents*. New York, UNFPA

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Programming

This guidance note is intended for UNFPA staff, detailing how to embed gender and social norms work within country programme documents (CPDs). It emphasizes that gender norms are embedded in material realities like policies, services, markets and institutions, influencing behaviour and outcomes. It provides a framework for conducting gender, power and social norm analyses, outlines intervention strategies to address gender norms related to issues specific to UNFPA's mandate, and stresses integrating social and gender norm programming throughout the CPD cycle.

OECD. (2021). *Man Enough? Measuring Masculine Norms to Promote Women's Empowerment*. Paris, Social Institutions and Gender Index, OECD

Resource Type: Technical paper

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Measurement

This OECD technical paper focuses on restrictive masculine norms and their consequences for women and girls' empowerment and well-being. It identifies 10 key norms related to masculinity in the public and private sphere. It also outlines proxy indicators—attitudes and behaviours—for measuring shifts in these norms, drawing on global data from sources like the SIGI Index and World Values Survey as well as studies such as IMAGES. A proposed set of indicators for measuring each of these 10 norms, and availability of data for each indicator, is included.

Perrin, N., Marsh, M., Clough, A. et al. (2019) *Social norms and beliefs about gender based violence scale: a measure for use with gender based violence prevention programs in low-resource and humanitarian settings*. *Conflict and Health* 13, 6

Resource Type: Sample questionnaire

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, GBV prevention

This research instrument was developed to evaluate the impact of GBV prevention programmes. It examines change over time in social norms and beliefs that maintain and tolerate sexual violence and other forms of GBV. The tool was designed for use in low-resource and complex humanitarian settings. Its scale measures individual attitudes and injunctive norms related to violence. Tested in South Sudan, it includes questions to measure three key social norms that support violence in that context: response to sexual violence, protecting family honour, and husbands' perceived right to use violence against their wives. The scale also helps to measure the strength of norms and the extent to which attitudes and norms are congruent.

Petit, V. (2019). *The Behavioural Drivers Model: A Conceptual Framework for Social and Behaviour Change Programming*. New York, UNICEF

Resource Type: Technical paper

Keywords: Social norms, SBC

The Behavioural Drivers Model outlines the theory that informs UNICEF's social and behaviour change work and informs the SBC guidance manual, "Everybody Wants to Belong." It reviews and integrates a range of theoretical perspectives on what drives behaviour, including social norms approaches, into a broader framework for understanding how to change individual behaviour. It treats social norms approaches as one way to understand behaviour and highlights the importance of formative research to understand complex drivers of individual behaviour. The paper uses the socioecological model and situates social norms at the community level within this framework. It views social norms and gender ideologies as part of the context for behaviour, rather than internalized by individuals and influential at all levels. Gender, power and other forms of inequalities are conceptualised as "meta-norms" and located at the level of institutions and societal factors within the socioecological framework. This has implications for programming, as gender-transformative approaches are then located at the social level, rather than at all levels of the socioecological framework.

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

Resource Type: Online training

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, GBV prevention

This online self-paced course serves as an introductory guide for practitioners involved in GBV prevention. It defines gender norms as a subset of social norms and provides a framework for addressing structural drivers that influence these norms. The training includes a presentation of norms that support violence which can be used for analysis and measurement. The course focuses on how to undertake norm-focused interventions within a gender-transformative approach. It also outlines how norm change interventions fit within a comprehensive approach to GBV prevention, and conversely how prevention and response interventions—such as access to services and policy change—can contribute to positive changes in the norms that support violence.

Samman, E. (2019). *Quantitative Measurement of Gendered Social Norms*. London, ALIGN

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Measurement

This ALIGN publication provides an overview of quantitative approaches to measure gendered social norms. It highlights that qualitative methods are required to explore the existence of norms and whether specific practices are driven by social norms. Quantitative studies can complement this by measuring not only attitudes and behaviours, but also descriptive and injunctive norms and sanctions. The publication provides examples of survey questions and the use of vignettes to explore norms. It notes that data on attitudes and behaviours can be drawn from large-scale representative surveys. If attitudes and behaviours are congruent and widespread, this suggests that a strong norm is likely in place, but if there are low levels of prevalence and acceptance, other factors may be more important in driving the practice. Other sources of data, such as administrative data can also indicate behaviour and suggest whether norms are a factor, such as low levels of reporting of violence in settings where prevalence is high. Big data can also be used to measure prevailing stated attitudes as well as shifts that may indicate norms are changing.

Siddiqi, M. and Subrahmanian, R. (2025). Accelerating Action Towards FGM Elimination: Lessons from Evidence on Effective Interventions. New York, UNICEF and UNFPA

Resource Type: Evidence base

Keywords: FGM, Evidence base, Programming

This evidence review of effective interventions to eliminate FGM synthesizes findings from multiple systematic reviews and high-quality evaluations to classify FGM interventions as effective, promising or ineffective. The review identifies five effective intervention strategies that have demonstrated success in addressing FGM: i) advancing girls' and women's formal education, ii) health education focused on FGM risks, iii) community dialogues and mobilization (including engagement with religious and cultural leaders), iv) media and social marketing campaigns, and v) training healthcare providers with health-system capacity building. While approaches like alternative rites of passage, conversion of traditional practitioners, and rescue centres have proven ineffective, public declarations and anti-FGM legislation are promising when combined with other approaches.

Social Norms Learning Collaborative. (2021a). Monitoring shifts in social norms: A guidance note for programme implementers. Washington DC, Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Measurement, Child marriage

Developed by the Learning Collaborative (see "Getting Practical" below), this practical guide on monitoring social norm shifts focuses on how to track changes in norm strength, social support and backlash. This information helps show the changing strength and acceptance of a norm. The resource includes questions and indicators for monitoring related to child marriage, and provides insights on monitoring and adjusting programmes to support shifting norms, respond to backlash and support diffusion of norm change beyond target communities.

Social Norms Learning Collaborative. (2021b). Social Norms Atlas: Understanding Global Social Norms and Related Concepts. Washington DC, Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University

Resource Type: Evidence base

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Evidence base

This resource developed by the Learning Collaborative draws on contributions from a range of key actors. The social norms atlas provides a sectoral analysis of social norms in key domains, including IPV and harmful practices. It identifies meta-norms that influence behaviours across various fields, such as norms around gender ideology, violence and control, privacy and social status. It highlights the importance of addressing these deeper norms for sustainable change.

Social Norms Mentorship Project (2023). *Social Norms Mentorship Project: Training Manual and Mentorship Guide*. London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene

Resource Type: Training manual

Keywords: Social norms

This manual, part of the Social Norms Mentorship Project, provides a foundational introduction to social norm change interventions and measurement. It situates social norms within the “flower model,” which highlights structural, material and individual factors together with norms as important in influencing social behaviour. The guide is designed to assist organizations in low-income settings, especially those working with children, to incorporate social norms interventions effectively. It includes practical steps for understanding norms and designing norm change interventions, supplemented by mentorship for participants.

The Equality Institute and Melbourne Research Alliance to End Violence against Women and their Children (2020). *Refocusing Power: Transforming Harmful Social Norms to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls*. Melbourne, Equality Institute

Resource Type: Tipsheet/Briefing Note

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, GBV prevention, Measurement

This briefing note underscores the importance of addressing power imbalances between men and women to prevent VAWG. It notes that social norms approaches have become a key focus of prevention efforts and critiques these approaches for their focus on individual attitudes and perceptions of community norms, which does not address broader societal systems, structures and power dynamics. The paper argues that power must be a key consideration in VAW prevention based on an understanding of power relations and different forms of power (e.g., “power over,” “power with”), recognizing the systems and structures that shape privilege and exclusion. Measurement methods utilized at the community and social levels of the socioecological framework can help reveal the wider human interactions and forces supporting and reinforcing violence at these levels. Social norms approaches are not *the* answer to ending violence, and norms and culture are not separate from economic and political dynamics.

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

Resource Type: Tipsheet/briefing note

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, GBV prevention

This paper outlines the gendered drivers of violence against women, including condoning violence, men’s control of decision-making, disrespect and aggression towards women, rigid gender roles, and ideologies of masculinity and femininity. It outlines norms that support and reinforce violence at each level of the socioecological framework. Social norms are one of many factors that contribute to violence against women. The paper highlights that norms can be positive and protective or negative and harmful. The norms that support and reinforce violence may be direct, for example that it is normal and acceptable for a man to beat his wife, or indirect, such as norms about family privacy, male sexual entitlement, and maintaining family harmony. Awareness-raising is not sufficient to change norms and, in some cases, may reinforce norms, for example by publicizing prevalence of violence. Interventions should focus on positive deviants, such as men who don’t use violence in their relationships, and on creating new positive norms, for example around equal decision-making in the family. Changing social norms must be part of a holistic approach to prevention.

Tostan. (2023). *Breakthrough Generation Initiative: Mixed-methods Final Evaluation Report*. Dakar, Tostan

Resource Type: Evidence base

Keywords: Social norms, FGM, Child marriage, Evidence base, SBC, Programming

Tostan's Community Empowerment Program is a 30-month initiative focused on fostering community-led change to reduce harmful practices like FGM and child marriage. The programme is intensive, with three components: i) classes held three times a week with adults and young people; ii) Community Management Committees; and iii) diffusion through social networks and media. The evaluation report notes significant positive changes in community cohesion, women's empowerment and agency, and a reduction in harmful practices such as FGM. However there was also resistance, with some community members continuing to practice FGM in secret. The programme's success is attributed to intensive, sustained community engagement and diffusion through social networks. The evaluation highlights that community empowerment initiatives embedded in gender and human rights frameworks are successful in contributing to harmful practice prevalence reductions.

UN Women and Social Development Direct (2020). *Respect Women Strategy Summary: Transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms*. New York, UN Women

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, GBV prevention, Evidence base

This is a brief guidance note on social norms that justify and sustain GBV, the associated risks and protective factors, and how norm change can support efforts to prevent and end GBV. It includes a summary of evidence of what works to change norms underpinning violence, highlighting that community mobilization approaches and group-based workshops are promising strategies in low- and middle-income settings. Edutainment and social media-based approaches may be effective when combined with these strategies. Initiatives working with men and boys alone, and standalone communication and awareness-raising, are not effective. It provides a theory of change and checklist for designing norm change initiatives and highlights the importance of targeting specific behaviours and norms to change.

UNFPA (2020). *How Changing Social Norms is Crucial in Achieving Gender Equality*. New York, UNFPA

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, FGM, Programming, SBC

This UNFPA compendium draws on social norms approaches from the Joint Programme on FGM, based on behavioural economics and game theory (Bicchieri and Mackie). It views gender norms as a form of social norm that affects all other social norms, recognizing that discriminatory gender norms maintain inequalities, and that those with power have a vested interest in maintaining these norms. It identifies clusters of gender norms that form "meta-norms" such as ideologies of femininity and masculinity. The compendium emphasises that not all behaviour is driven by social norms, and that structural changes, such as socio-economic changes, often drive norm change. It provides a detailed theory of change for FGM programming and a framework for implementing social norm interventions, including analysis of social norms and reference groups, community engagement, collective action and public pledging, diffusion and publicizing new norms, and strengthening the enabling environment. It stresses the importance of promoting positive norms over simply eliminating harmful ones. It recognises that IPV norms differ from FGM norms, as FGM is enforced by the norm, while violence may not be a norm but still may be condoned.

UNFPA and UNICEF. (2022a). Manual on Social Norms and Change. New York, UNICEF

Resource Type: Training manual

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, FGM, SBC

This manual provides an in-depth introduction to social norm theory, based on Bicchieri's work and approach. It highlights the importance of distinguishing between social norms and individual attitudes, and between social, legal and moral norms and conventions, as well as understanding the strength of social norms and the sanctions that reinforce them, and any deviance from the norm. The manual includes a module on gender norms but does not address gender and power dynamics in any depth, and a module on legal reforms, which stresses that where there is a gap between the law and social norms, legal reform is less likely to be effective. The manual details seven key elements for norm change, some of which include understanding the context, working with communities, mass abandonment, diffusion of the norm change, and harmonization with legislation.

UNFPA and UNICEF. (2022b). Norms for Change: Changing the Way You See the World. New York, UNICEF

Resource Type: Training manual

Keywords: Social norms, Child marriage, SBC, FGM

This training manual and slide deck is a companion to the online Social Norms Programming and Measurement Training. This training resource outlines the stages for implementing social norms change, including formative research, participatory community mobilization, diffusion and publicizing change, building a supportive environment, and programme monitoring and evaluation. It emphasizes the importance of understanding behavioural drivers, as not all behaviours are social norms, and strategies may need to address other factors that hold the practice in place or the underlying norms that permit or excuse the practice. It does not substantively address gender or power dynamics, which is central to a more comprehensive, gender-transformative approach.

UNICEF and UNFPA (2020a). Technical Note on Gender Norms. New York, UNICEF

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Child marriage, SBC

This technical brief, created under the Global Programme to End Child Marriage, defines gender norms as a subset of social norms, and highlights the ways that gender norms reinforce power and privilege in ways that benefit men and boys and sustain gender inequality. It outlines a four-step process for addressing child marriage by targeting underlying gender norms: map and assess gender norms and other factors underpinning child marriage; select a package of interventions that address the most salient gender norms; situate these interventions within the socioecological model; and monitor changes and adapt programming accordingly. Effective gender norm change requires interventions across the socioecological framework, at institutional, systems and community levels. These include legislative and policy reforms, economic incentives and educational initiatives, social and behaviour change communications, partnering with men and boys, and empowering adolescent girls. The brief highlights the importance of measuring gender norm change as well as monitoring for potential backlash and unintended consequences of norm change interventions.

UNFPA and UNICEF (2020b). *The ACT Framework Package: Measuring Social Norms Around Female Genital Mutilation*. New York, UNICEF

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Measurement, SBC, FGM

This package is designed to measure social norms specifically related to FGM, though it can be applied to other harmful practices and GBV. It provides tools and instruments for quantitative and qualitative data collection, with detailed guidelines on study design and implementation. The framework positions gender and power as contextual factors, contrasting with a gender norms approach that views gender and power as integral to FGM-related norms. The toolkit includes instruments and indicators for measuring social norms that support FGM, as well as broader measures of gender equality and women's status that can be adapted to different contexts, offering comprehensive measurement tools. The resource is comprehensive and would be best suited to dedicated FGM social norm change initiatives.

UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (2024). *Meta-synthesis and meta-analysis of evidence on child marriage in South Asia*. Kathmandu, UNICEF

Resource Type: Evidence base

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Child marriage, Evidence base

This comprehensive meta-synthesis and meta-analysis of evidence on child marriage interventions in South Asia covers the period 2010-2024. The analysis includes 65 studies across seven countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan) and assesses the effectiveness of different intervention approaches in preventing child marriage in the region. The research examined six main intervention typologies: social norm change, income and economic strengthening, education, girls' empowerment, sexual and reproductive health, and law and policy reform. Social norms interventions can have a significant effect on prevalence of child marriage: the effect increases when norm change is combined with empowerment and SRHR components. Interventions targeting education-related norms appear to be more effective than tackling harder-to-shift norms around gender roles and relations. Engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including decision-makers (parents, both men and women) and wider communities, and using diverse modalities for norm change that include a full package of community mobilization, mass and interactive media, sensitization, and training is more effective. However, only a small number of studies (seven) were included and some norm change interventions did not significantly shift attitudes or behaviours.

UNICEF. (2022). *Social Norms Programming and Measurement*. New York, UNICEF

Resource Type: Online training

Keywords: Social norms, SBC, Child marriage

An online course that introduces social norm theory and how to integrate social norm change into behaviour change programmes. The training takes a staged approach, including formative research; identifying whether a behaviour is driven by a norm/s; identifying the strength of the norm, with a focus on changing norms that are already changing; identifying key drivers of behaviour; and developing strategies around these drivers. The course provides a good introduction to social norm theory but lacks depth in addressing broader power dynamics and gender-specific issues.

UNICEF (2020). *Participatory Research Toolkit for Social Norms Measurement*. New York, UNICEF

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: FGM, SBC, Social norms, Measurement

Linked to resources on FGM social norm change, particularly the ACT Framework, this toolkit provides tools for social norm measurement, including for formative research, monitoring and evaluation. It includes nine tools for mapping social and gender norms as well as social networks, and provides examples of vignettes to explore social norms.

UNICEF. (2019). *Everybody Wants to Belong: A Practical Guide to Tackling and Leveraging Social Norms in Behaviour Change Programming*. New York, UNICEF

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, SBC

This UNICEF manual for SBC practitioners serves as a foundational text on social norms and behaviour change and informs other social norm training packages. It was developed in consultation with the Learning Collaborative and is based on the “Behavioural Drivers Model” (see above). While gender and power are viewed as “meta-norms,” the manual recognises that gender norms can also be social norms and are embedded in institutions and practices. Not all behaviours are driven by social norms, and social norm change is not sufficient to change behaviours when other drivers are also in play. Formative research is required to understand what drives a specific behaviour and whether social norms are an important factor. When social norms are identified as a key driver, interventions should: i) assess the norm through formative research, ii) seek community-level change, iii) enable community leadership, iv) engage people at multiple levels, v) correct misperceptions about common behaviours, vi) address power imbalances and marginalization, vii) create safe spaces for critical reflection, viii) create new norms and leverage positive ones, ix) root the issue in community value systems, and x) work with positive deviants.

World Bank Group. (2023). *Addressing Social and Gender Norms to Promote Gender Equality*. Washington, World Bank Group

Resource Type: Guidance

Keywords: Social norms, Gender norms, Evidence base, Measurement

This World Bank guidance document underscores the role of gender norms as a form of social norms that constrain women’s access to resources and opportunities, influence policies and institutions, and prescribe and constrain behaviour. It discusses the use of data sources such as the DHS, World Values Survey, and IMAGES for measuring norms. It notes the importance of measuring the strength of descriptive and injunctive norms and sanctions to inform programme design, monitoring and impact assessment. It highlights original research undertaken by Meta and the World Bank, which found that in some regions and countries individual attitudes and social norms on women’s economic participation are strongly aligned, while in other areas there is a gap between progressive individual attitudes and more regressive social norms. The report outlines strategies for norm change, emphasizing the use of indirect influences—including economic incentives and legal changes—to support normative shifts, as well as direct influences, including information and edutainment, role models, and group discussions and engagement. It highlights the challenges in changing deeply embedded norms tied to power and control and stresses the need for collective engagement to manage risks of backlash.

