MORGANA WINGARD FOR USAID

ADVANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: SOCIAL NORMS LANDSCAPING STUDY

USAID WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

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Implemented by:

Banyan Global
1120 20th Street NW, Suite 950
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: +1 202-684-9367

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TABLES, FIGURES, AND BOXES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ACRONYMS

AAAS	American Association for the Advancement of Science
ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CIMMYT	International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center
CoP	Community of Practice
DDI	Development, Democracy, and Innovation
EDCO	Electricity Distribution Company
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EMERGE	Evidence-based Measure of Empowerment for Research on Gender Equality
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GenDev	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Hub
GITA	Gender Integration Technical Assistance
GRAD	Graduation with Resilience to Achieve Sustainable Development
GROW	Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women
HHMs	Household Methodologies
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IMAGES	International Men and Gender Equality Survey
MFIs	Microfinance Institutions
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIT	Personal Initiative Training
RCT	Randomized Control Trial
SGB	Small and Growing Business

SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
SNAP	Social Norms Analysis Plot
SNET	Social Norms Exploration Tool
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WE-Care	Women's Economic Empowerment and Care Program
WE-RISE	Women's Empowerment: Improving Resilience, Income, and Food Security
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WEMAN	Women's Empowerment Mainstreaming and Networking
WWB	Women's World Banking

BACKGROUND

USAID has a long standing commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, including women's economic empowerment through thoughtful and innovative programming. Supported under the USAID Gender Integration Technical Assistance II Task Order, Banyan Global is the implementing partner for the USAID Women's Economic Empowerment Community of Practice (USAID WEE CoP).

Through the USAID WEE CoP, members share knowledge to better understand what works, what doesn't, and how to exponentially accelerate increasing women's economic empowerment and gender equality. The USAID WEE CoP was established to gather and generate evidence and address data gaps. Landscaping studies were conducted to better capture the breadth and depth of the following learning question:

> **Legal Systems, Internal Organizational and Business Policies, and Social Norms Barriers including Gender-Based Violence (GBV)** - What are proven and evidence-based existing approaches that governments, private sector entities, civil society organizations, and societies are using to:
>
> i) Shift social norms to support and increase women's economic power and gender equality;
>
> ii) Build capacity to develop, reform, implement, and enforce governmental policies, laws, and regulations as well as internal organizational and business policies to increase women's economic power and gender equality; and
>
> iii) Mitigate gender-based violence and harmful behaviors that reduce women's safety and ability to participate in and benefit from the economy in general and women's economic empowerment initiatives in particular. What are successful ways to "do no harm" when designing and implementing women's economic empowerment programming and what are proven approaches and leading practices for identifying, preventing, mitigating, and measuring gender-based violence taking place against women in the world of work.

This report focuses on part "i" of the learning question above and relies on primary and secondary data collection conducted between May and September 2021. Based on a literature review of 118 documents and interviews with 11 key informants, a typology was developed to identify and explain approaches with the strongest evidence of effectiveness in shifting social norms that advance women's economic power and gender equality. Interventions were then ranked as *proven*, *promising*, and *potential*, based on the evidence-ranking criteria (Table 1). Documents identified and reviewed included internal project and evaluation reports, external impact, and performance evaluations, working papers, strategic plans, annual reports, books, and peer-reviewed articles. In general, mixed methods that combined quantitative and qualitative assessment techniques provided the most useful insights on gendered effects and evidence for the report. A full elaboration on the methodology and limitations as well as a complete list of documents consulted for the literature review are included in the supplemental annexes to this report (Annex D and Annex E, respectively).

TABLE 1. EVIDENCE CATEGORIES, DESCRIPTION AND CRITERIA

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA
Proven	Strong evidence of clear beneficial effect	Good evidence based on multi-country or longitudinal analyses, peer reviewed articles, randomized control trials (RCTs), quasi-experimental studies, and external evaluations; or several individual or regional studies that give similar findings (published research or studies conducted by internationally recognized institutions)
Promising	Strong evidence of promising beneficial effect	Sufficient body of evidence drawn from one or more country-level studies, internal assessments, or evaluations undertaken by implementing organizations, and project-specific reports that demonstrate a correlation between outputs and outcomes.
Potential	Positive trend with limited or mixed effects, not well studied	Several reports indicating positive trends or impacts from newer innovations, but no systematic reviews or analyses. The trends or impacts are largely anecdotal or qualitative.

This study has several limitations. The interface between social norms (also referred to as norms) and women's economic power is less well documented and studied. Many programs or projects identify social norms as a key factor in facilitating or constraining interventions, but most do not identify, diagnose, or elaborate on specific norms nor measure impact. Terminology and programming related to social norms and gender-transformative change are still relatively new. Descriptions, definitions, and meanings vary among different projects or programs, even among those that have normative change components. Moreover, due to the cross-sectoral and multicomponent approach of many normative-change interventions, it is not always possible to uncouple economic empowerment strategies, activities, and outcomes from the overarching intervention, to better assess evidence of impacts and results.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Unpacking social norms and realizing positive shifts in gender discriminatory beliefs or narratives are integral to advancing women's economic power and gender equality. A United Nations (UN) report on Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) identified harmful or adverse social norms as the number one constraint to women, noting that these are largely responsible for such barriers as: discriminatory laws; failures to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid household work and care; and lack of access to assets and resources.[1]

Social norms are broadly understood as implicit and informal rules that define acceptable and appropriate behavior within a given group or society. Many social norms are essentially gender norms that define appropriate actions for women and girls, men and boys. While gender norms tend to be deeply entrenched and more difficult to change, a growing number of studies provide evidence that positive shifts in social norms can and do lead to increased economic opportunities and agency, as well as more equal divisions of care and domestic work.

An increasing body of evidence shows the importance of addressing social norms in the world of work as an essential component of WEE. This landscaping study summarizes this evidence, as well as the proven, promising, and potential best practices for addressing harmful or discriminatory social norms in the context of WEE interventions. Section One provides an overview of different types of norms, including approaches to diagnosing and measuring social norms and the social and economic implications of norms on WEE, particularly gender norms. Section Two examines different approaches to normative change based on the following typologies: (1) household methodologies (HHMs), including personal agency; (2) reference groups and diffusion; (3) platforms for collective learning and action; (4) information and media; and (5) workplace and organizational social norms. These typologies offer examples and evidence of interventions that have the potential to achieve sustainable shifts toward embracing positive norms in support of women's economic power and gender equality. However, they are generally not undertaken in isolation as separate interventions, but rather as part of a broader integrated package of activities. Section Three draws on findings from the literature review and key informant interviews to categorize different interventions, practices, and approaches according to proven, promising, and potential effects (as summarized in Table 1). Sections Four and Five summarize gaps in evidence and recommendations, respectively.

> Greater equality through positive norms and behavior change can lead to improvements in women's livelihoods and well-being, including better access to services and markets, and increased access to and control over household assets and incomes. However, opportunities and constraints for WEE tend to be filtered through gender norms that inhibit where, when, and whether women are employed or self-employed. The effectiveness of interventions often hinges on how well social norms are diagnosed, understood, and integrated into program strategies and activities. A critical finding from this review is the importance of **integrating norms-transformative strategies to address inequities and power imbalances**, even when not a primary outcome of the program or project.

FINDINGS

Constraints to WEE are strongly correlated with gender norms regarding: the acceptability of work in specific sectors and activities; mobility and respectability; and care responsibilities and domestic divisions of labor.[2] Discriminatory gender norms dictate women's economic roles and time-use activities and shape their access to employment, networks, and information. They also influence how different types of skills and work are valued, affecting prices, wages, and other benefits derived from the work. Finally, norms also affect women's access to and control over income and other assets as well as the allocation of unpaid work and resources within the household. Norms that disadvantage women in the economy include: the allocation and devaluation of care work (generally unpaid, not considered "work," and disproportionately undertaken by women); the over-representation of women in the informal sector; and stereotypes that suggest women are less capable than men, which become reproduced in the workplace and in institutions.

Many factors influence social norms, particularly as they relate to power and gender. Overall, transformative and relationship-level interventions have the strongest evidence base for shifting social norms and effecting changes in women's economic power and gender equality. Less-effective interventions are those that target economic opportunities for women in an isolated way without sufficiently informing or engaging other family members (especially husbands, fathers, brothers, and mothers-in-law); by adding facilitated reflection or dialogue, an intervention can increase support for the activity, based on a clear understanding of the benefits for all. A segregated focus on opportunities for women alone has sometimes proved counterproductive and can increase risk of harm, including gender-based violence (GBV), exacerbation of women's time poverty and exhaustion, and other negative unintended consequences.

FOUR PROVEN INTERVENTIONS

1. **HHMs that facilitate dialogues, critical reflection, and goal-setting,** to trigger shifts in norms that promote more equitable workloads and economic opportunities within households and communities. Often combined with sector-based activities, such as agriculture or health, HHMs have demonstrated effective and sustained shifts in social norms leading to improved relationships and cooperation within households and between partners, shared workloads, expansion in economic opportunities and increased income, and reductions in GBV.

2. **Group-based collective action and learning that increases women's productivity and financial inclusion.** Village savings and loans associations (VSLAs), producer organizations or cooperatives, self-help and other groups bring women together for group-based learning, empowerment-based life skills, and economic activities help shift norms around women earning and controlling income. This can increase social and economic capital and also lead to lasting shifts in gender norms, such as delays in the age of marriage, acceptance of the appropriateness of women engaging in markets and/or production, and shared childcare.

3. **Engage boys and men to change social norms, advance gender equality, and address gender-related vulnerabilities.** Men and boys should be engaged through entry points that appeal to men's self-interest, encouraging positive masculinities that focus on healthy behaviors that benefit families and communities—including cooperation in productive and economic

activities and equitable distribution of household tasks, caregiving, and decision-making. Meaningfully engaging men and boys is critical for women's economic power and gender equality, and for transforming the social and gender norms that reinforce patriarchy and inequality.

4. **Gender analyses and norms diagnostics that identify and assess the strength of a norm and its related facilitating and constraining factors.** Context-specific groundwork and formative assessments help to identify barriers to women's participation in economic activities and broader gender equality, as well as potential pathways for effecting positive shifts in perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors. Analysis and diagnostics are crucial to unpacking the strength and pervasiveness of a norm, including how it may have changed over time, and to developing targeted, norms-transformative strategies and approaches.

THREE PROMISING INTERVENTIONS

1. **Mass media campaigns, targeted messaging, and "edutainment" that change perceptions, beliefs, and behavior.** Programming that resonates with the listener or viewer in a compelling narrative broadens perspectives and creates more acceptance of new roles and norms—particularly about what is considered appropriate or suitable for women. Mass media can influence perceptions of women's roles in economic activities, the workforce, and access to finance, in different contexts and countries.

2. **Organized diffusion that facilitates positive normative shifts through wider public engagement, fostered through information campaigns and social marketing in coordination with policy makers and the private sector.** Adherence to and enforcement of social norms depends largely on others whose opinions matter most such as reference or peer groups who influence behavior through their approval (or fear of their disapproval). This underscores the importance of role modeling and positive deviance in influencing shifts as well as the use of social network analysis to identify members of reference groups who could increase support for broader diffusion.

3. **Multicomponent training and education initiatives aimed at shifting social norms and addressing inequalities.** These initiatives are most effective when they combine economic-focused interventions with empowerment-based life skills. Information to counter low self-esteem and to increase human capital has demonstrated effectiveness in increasing income-generating activities and delaying marriage.

ONE POTENTIAL INTERVENTION

1. **Private sector organizational norms and policies and technologies that enable and motivate women's participation in the economy and workforce.** Egalitarian workplace and public policies, such as childcare facilities, paternity and maternity leave, time- and labor-saving technologies and equipment, and safe and female-friendly infrastructure, show potential for shifting gender norms and creating space for women's economic autonomy through gainful employment or self-employment. Studies of key performance indicators also provide a compelling business case for improved productivity and profitability. Time- and labor-saving technologies do not necessarily lead to shifts in social norms that support gender equality and

women's economic power, but they do potentially boost opportunities for women's economic engagement and autonomy.

SIX GAPS IN EVIDENCE

1. **Appropriate scope and scale for different norms change interventions.** There is little analysis or evidence that provides clear guidance on "right-sized" interventions for implementation, replication, and scalability. More information on implementation variables (e.g., duration, saturation, participant characteristics, group dynamics, and costs) is needed to better inform optimum design, planning, and implementation, to initiate and sustain positive shifts in norms.

2. **Impact of norms on women's economic activities among different social and age groups.** Few insights are provided about the impact of prevailing norms among different groups or about normative shifts correlated with age, caste, ethnicity, and locale. This also points to a lack of intersectional analysis, particularly among people with disabilities or those of diverse gender identity or sexual orientation. There is also a lack of observation and analysis of different types of group dynamics (e.g., cohesion, competition, or power imbalances among members). Disaggregated data, information, and analysis is needed to more effectively monitor and evaluate impacts and interactions among and within different groups.

3. **Supportive norms to facilitate WEE.** Though most gender norms have an inhibiting influence on women's economic activities and opportunities, some do not. For example, women sometimes benefit from stereotypes that label them as being more honest, less corrupt, and less of credit risks than men. Further analysis is needed to identify values, processes, and beliefs that could be used to leverage normative shifts that advance women's economic power and gender equality.

4. **Diffusion processes and impacts.** Studies provide little information on how normative change may be spreading, beyond those directly participating in the intervention. Monitoring various diffusion modalities and messengers will lead to a better understanding of how norms spread and shift over time and location. This should be included as a regular part of reporting, analysis, and evaluation research.

5. **Norms measurement and diagnostics.** Few programs draw on social norms theory to identify different kinds of norms and to measure the strength of those norms as they pertain to women's economic activities and related behaviors and expectations. Changes in attitudes tend to be measured as an outcome, despite evidence that attitudes do not always correlate with behavior. Even when measurement is conducted, few studies are explicit about the norms being measured and specific evidence of weakened negative impact or permeation. Capturing initial and ongoing signs of shifts in specific norms would provide insights into normative-change processes and impacts; this should be a regular part of reporting and analysis, and should also inform activity implementation.

6. **Longitudinal analysis to gauge sustained impact.** Few assessments or research studies incorporate continuation of surveys or qualitative studies over a longer time frame. Follow-up with participants for at least a year (or longer) following the end of an intervention would

increase understanding of what works to sustain change and which approaches are more effective.

Refer to Section 4 for a full discussion of gaps in evidence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A critical finding from this review is the importance of norms-transformative strategies to address inequities and power imbalances, even when that is not a primary outcome of the program or project. Characteristics of more effective interventions include: (1) strong gender and power analysis that informs implementation; (2) strong theory of change, rooted in the specific context of gender and power dynamics; (3) combined social and economic empowerment components; and (4) gender-transformative approaches informed by feminist principles that expand human choice and opportunities by addressing inequality. Human resources to support intervention work is also crucial: specifically, capable facilitators and gender specialists whose work is supported by senior staff and who can engage project participants and other staff members in correcting misinformation and facilitating dialogues that promote positive norms.

Nine key recommendations from this study are as follows:

1. Design multi-component interventions that combine gender-transformative social and economic components with facilitated reflection activities and critical analysis among family members, peers, and local leaders.

2. Facilitate normative shifts with new information, well-informed messaging, and deliberations that correct misinformation and misperceptions and that offer positive alternatives or "new" norms.

3. Support facilitated discussions and training for staff to analyze their perspectives and biases and reorient mindsets.

4. Integrate norms-transformative strategies and approaches into program design, planning, and implementation to improve outputs and outcomes.

5. Conduct gender analysis and norms diagnostics to identify social norms and power dynamics, and to determine facilitating or constraining factors to normative shifts.

6. Use qualitative surveys, including vignettes, to identify, measure, monitor, and evaluate changes; respond adaptively as needed to do no harm and mitigate risks of unintended consequences.

7. Support research and analysis to assess "right-sized" approaches and modalities (duration, intensity, scale, and scope) to better inform replication and scalability.

8. Work with the private sector in supporting changes in internal organizational and business policies.

9. Invest in longitudinal analyses to gauge sustained impact as part of program monitoring, evaluation, and learning, to increase evidence of what works to sustain change.

Refer to Section 5 for a full discussion of recommendations.

1. SOCIAL NORMS THAT ACCELERATE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC POWER

Unpacking social norms and realizing shifts in gender-discriminatory beliefs or narratives are integral to advancing women's economic power and gender equality. Greater equality through positive social norms and behavior change can lead to improvements in livelihoods and well-being, including better access to services and markets and increased access to and control over household assets and income. This transformation has implications not only for the lives and livelihoods of women and girls, but also for human development, labor markets, productivity, and economic growth.[3]

ISTOCK

To better understand the different ways that norms affect women's economic power and gender equality, this section examines (1) different types of norms and the influences that tend to affect shifts in social norms and behaviors; (2) approaches to diagnosing and measuring social norms; and (3) social and economic implications of norms on Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE), particularly gender norms. A list of key organizations working in the social norms space is included in the supplemental annex to this report (Annex C).

1.1 TYPES OF NORMS

Social norms are broadly understood as implicit and informal rules that define acceptable and appropriate behavior within a given group or society. They influence behavior (what individuals do), collective attitudes (what the group thinks or feels), and individual beliefs (regarding the behaviors and attitudes of others).[4]

The existence of a social norm, and the extent to which individuals are motivated to maintain the norm, depends largely on individuals' beliefs about what others do (descriptive norms), what others approve of (injunctive norms), and the expected consequences associated with compliance and noncompliance. Many social norms are essentially gender norms that define appropriate actions for women and girls, and men and boys. Table 2 provides an overview of different motivations and terminologies and the associated explanations or definitions that underpin social norms.

Norms are sustained by unwritten codes of conduct and imposed moralities. Resistance to shifts in social norms is reinforced by sanctions or rewards that create barriers against change. Violence and ostracism (shunning) are common sanctions, while enhanced social status and inclusion are ubiquitous rewards for compliance.[5] As individuals comply with gendered normative expectations, the norms strengthen and become embedded in formal and informal institutions, often shaping unequal access to resources and curtailing freedoms such as voice, power, and sense of self, as well as the realities in which people live and learn.[6]

TABLE 2. KEY SOCIAL NORMS TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

MOTIVATIONS	TERMINOLOGIES		DEFINITIONS
Individually motivated	**Attitude**		What I believe is good or bad and what ought to be
	Knowledge		What I believe is true
Socially motivated	**Social norms**	Descriptive norms or empirical expectations	What I believe others do
		Injunctive norms or normative expectations	What I believe others will approve/disapprove of me doing
	Gender norms		How I expect individuals to behave, based on their gender identity
	Reference groups		People whose opinions matter to me (for a particular behavior or context) People who reward or sanction me for my behavior
Individually and socially motivated	**Behavior**		What I do

Adapted from: IRH. 2019. *A Landscape Review: Addressing Social Norms in Six USAID Sectors.* Washington, D.C.: Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University. (Link)

Persistent normative and empirical expectations around gender roles and responsibilities tend to reinforce unequal status, power relations, and limited life options, and they can be harmful for men and women alike.[7] This is highlighted in Box 1, which outlines the pervasiveness of norms and how they reproduce inequities across different development sectors. Norms around masculinity tend to justify violence and restrictions on women's mobility, agency, and ability to own property or access resources, as well as their ability to pursue paid employment and other economic opportunities, normalizing the idea that men should have control over women and girls. They also reduce opportunities for women and men to share workloads, even when such task-shifting and sharing could improve family relationship bonds, reduce the pressure or stress felt by the predominant provider or "bread winner," and increase efficiency, productivity, and income.

Box 1. Cross-cutting influence of gender and power

The 2021 *Social Norms Atlas* report provides a cross-sectoral analysis of gendered and non-gendered norms, highlighting that gender and power define access to finances, property, and inheritance, as well as who has access to services, how services are provided, and who participates in family, social, and community meetings, events, and decisions. Among the 50 norms included in the *Social Norms Atlas* (five per sector), most related to gender ideology (34), and many related to control and violence (21) and authority (14). This sampling of the ways in which gender and power affect norms and behaviors demonstrates the pervasiveness of power dynamics and gender inequities across development sectors, and the importance of identifying norms and mitigating backlash in design and implementation. A key takeaway of the analysis was that **effective behavior change programs must tackle issues of gender inequity, gender norms, and power**, even when gender equity is not a primary outcome of the project.

Source: Social Norms Learning Collaborative. 2021. *Social Norms Atlas: Understanding Global Social Norms and Related Concepts.* Washington, D.C.: Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University. (Link).

1.2 MEASURING NORMS

Diagnosing and measuring social norms is challenging. This process requires unpacking the strength and pervasiveness of a norm and how it may have changed over time, as well as identifying who is involved in enforcement and what rewards (or penalties) are associated with compliance (or noncompliance).[8] Determining this information can be even more difficult for norms around WEE (and wider empowerment), which tend to be constrained by gender norms that regulate roles and responsibilities among family members and within households.[9]

Although pressures to comply with, refer to, and be influenced by others remain a powerful force, social norms can change and evolve. Table 3 provides an overview of the key signs of shifts in social norms for program monitoring, as outlined in a 2021 report by the Social Norms Learning Collaborative.[10] The report also recommends that projects measure and monitor social backlash (to mitigate the impacts of stigmatization, violence, and other forms of sanctioning); diffusion (to understand how changes are spreading); and the attitudes and potential biases of project staff and facilitators.[11]

TABLE 3. SIGNS OF SHIFTING SOCIAL NORMS		
INITIAL SIGNS	EXPLANATION	EXAMPLE WEE-ORIENTED QUESTIONS
People perceive that it is becoming more common to act outside the norm	When a practice is a social norm, people believe that most other people follow the norm. If people start to believe that it has become common not to follow the norm, this change can indicate the norm is shifting.	Do you think that most women in your community should be able to hold a job even if they have young children? Has this changed over time? Why/why not? Is this change the same across different groups of people?
People think that social backlash has decreased for not following the norm And/or People think that social support has increased for people who do not follow the norm	When a practice is a social norm, people perceive others will disapprove if they do not follow the norm. This can include taboos for even talking about a norm. Changes in perceptions of social backlash or support for not complying with a norm can indicate a norm is shifting.	What would happen if a woman in your community got a job as a miner (or other occupation in which women are not typically employed)? Has this response changed over time? Why and from which groups/people? Would anyone support working women? Who? Has this changed and why? Are there any changes in people's willingness to talk openly about the acceptability of women working in jobs/sectors that are dominated by men?
The community no longer has consensus about the norm	Social norms are shared perceptions about which behaviors are common and appropriate within a group. If individual perceptions start to differ from one another and the community no longer has consensus about a norm, this can indicate a norm is changing.	Analyze whether people disagree about 1) whether women should work in sectors or positions dominated by men or 2) whether women in those types of positions would face social backlash or sanctioning.

Source: Adapted from, Social Norms Learning Collaborative. 2021. *Monitoring Shifts in Social Norms: A Guidance Note for Program Implementers*. Washington, D.C. ([Link](#))

There is increasing recognition of the primacy of addressing social norms and the need to scale up norms-shifting programs and activities, but it remains unclear whether the intended shifts in norms and behavior are being achieved in programs and activities, largely because of inconsistent or inadequate measurement.[12] Still, key informants expressed cautious optimism that the tools for measuring norms are improving and show promise for effectively capturing changes.

Examples of tools being used to diagnose norms and measure shifts include CARE's *Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP) Framework*, Oxfam's *Social Norms Diagnostic Tool*, and the Institute for Reproductive Health's (IRH) *Social Norms Exploration Tool (SNET)*. As outlined in Box 2, these provide guidance on identifying norms, assessing the strength of sanctions, and recognizing the circumstances in which norms may be shifting or weakening. They also suggest ways of integrating contextual analyses of social and gender norms to inform strategies and theories of change, to identify indicators for monitoring and evaluation, and to assess outputs and outcomes at different stages (e.g., baseline and endline surveys and impact evaluations).

National and cross-national datasets can also provide useful information for measuring changes at an aggregate level, including the prevalence and strength of norms in different settings over time and the extent to which norms are distributed within a population.[13] The World Values Survey contains data from more than 80 countries on cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs about gender, family, poverty, education, health, and security. Demographic and Health Surveys provide nationally representative data on demographics and social and health behaviors, including information related to

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women's empowerment. The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) measures normative constraints and changes in gender norms resulting from program interventions in agriculture and market system development.

Other useful sources for secondary data are the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), which is carried out in more than 25 countries, and the World Health Organization's Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women, which is conducted in 10 countries. Moreover, as referenced in Box 2, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) complements other indices by providing critical insights into discriminatory laws and the social norms and practices that perpetuate inequalities.[14]

Box 2. Tools for diagnosing and measuring shifts in social norms

SNAP Framework.[15] Provides practical guidelines to examine preliminary effects on: (1) what I think others do (empirical expectations); (2) what I think others expect me to do (normative expectations); (3) under what situations is it acceptable to break the norms; (4) anticipated reactions of others whose opinions matter to me (sanctions); and (5) how much sanctions matter for me. The framework incorporates normative aspects of behavioral/attitudinal questions into baseline and endline surveys, primarily using vignettes (or short stories) that feature norms in a particular context accompanied by follow-up questions for participants to discuss the story. The aim is to better understand what is considered typical behavior in the community, what behaviors have approval (or disapproval), what are the consequences for transgressing norms, and whether those consequences deter rule-breaking. This tool enables critical reflection on sanctions and the circumstances in which socially

transgressive behavior might be acceptable—which can reveal normative shifts or openings to support behavior change.

SNET.[16] A participatory and team-based approach to social norms exploration designed as a rapid assessment tool for program planners and implementers to develop a preliminary understanding of social norms. There are five main phases: (1) plan and prepare; (2) identify reference groups; (3) explore social norms; (4) analyze findings; and (5) apply findings. The tool guides users in gathering information about the most relevant social norms affecting behaviors in a specific setting and the groups or individuals who influence those behaviors (reference groups). It also outlines an organized process for setting objectives, training staff, selecting tools from a range of participatory exercises, conducting data collection, analyzing the data, and applying findings.

Social Norms Diagnostic Tool.[17] Outlines a set of participatory exercises to help program teams identify and discuss normative perceptions and expectations that shape, constrain, or promote different behaviors. It is rooted in participatory action research approaches for diagnosing social norms through the socio-ecological behavior change model, engaging community members as agents of change in identifying solutions to problems. The tool has been adapted to explore norms that influence engagement in economic development initiatives among women and youth. The tool provides guiding questions for discussions as well as guidance in diagnosing social norm impacts to be applied over the course of a two-to-three-day workshop (depending on the number of social norms). The workshop is facilitated and attended by community members, including young men and women, parents, business leaders, community elders, teachers, and religious leaders. The aim is to identify different norms at the initial stages of project implementation and beyond, to gauge the strength of norms and signs of normative shifts.

1.3 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF GENDER NORMS

Social norms influence the economic spaces considered appropriate for women and men respectively to occupy. Constraints to WEE are strongly correlated with gender norms regarding: the acceptability of work in specific sectors and activities; mobility and respectability; and care responsibilities and domestic divisions of labor.[18] Norms that disadvantage women in the economy include: the allocation and devaluation of care work (generally unpaid, not considered "work," and disproportionately undertaken by women); the over-representation of women in the informal sector; and stereotypes that suggest women are less capable than men, which become reproduced in the workplace and in institutions.[19]

Marcus (2021) notes that two main sets of norms affect WEE: norms related to gender and economic activity, and broader norms that influence behaviors. These are shown in Figure 1, which offers a framework for understanding how gender norms combine with stereotypes about men's and women's capabilities in ways that affect human capital, livelihood opportunities, and time use.

Figure 1. Gender Norms and Women's Economic Outcomes
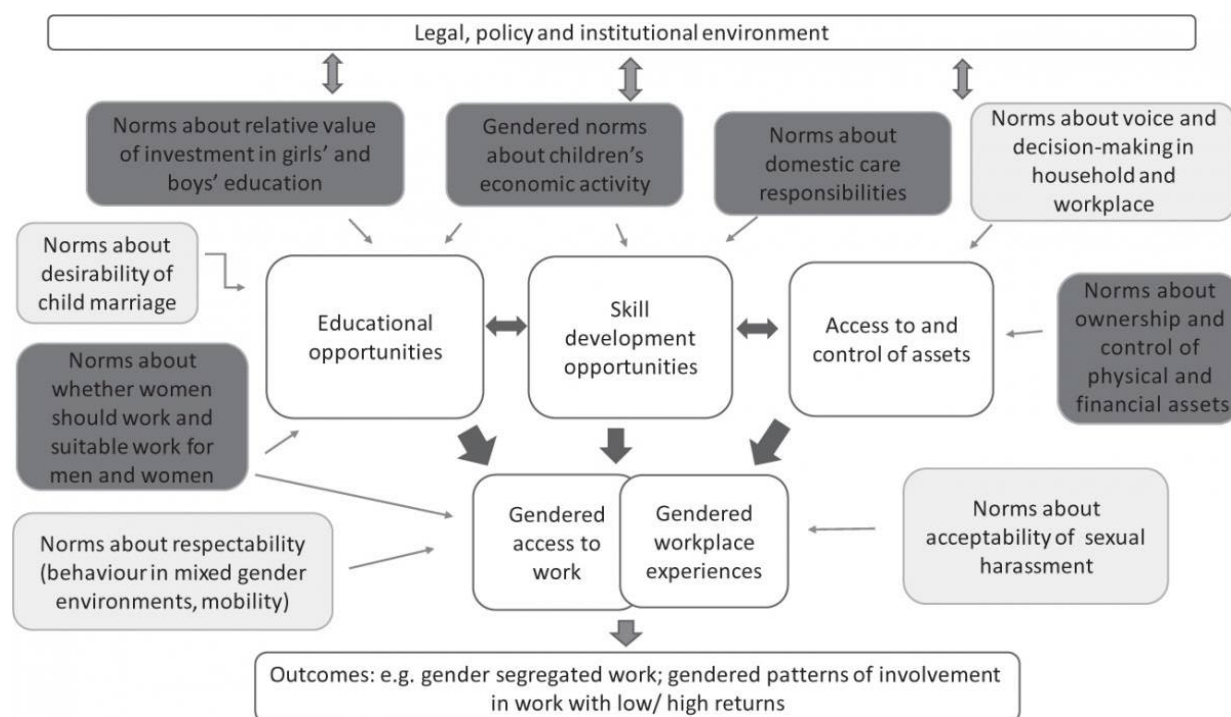
Source: Marcus, Rachel. 2021. "Gender, Social Norms, and Women's Economic Empowerment." In *Women's Economic Empowerment: Insights from Africa and South Asia,* edited by Kate Grantham, Gillian Dowie, and Arjan de Haan, pages 126–153. Routledge Studies in Development and Society. (Link)

Economic autonomy through gainful employment or self-employment can lead to women's wider economic participation and can enable shifts that trigger positive change in other areas, such as women's political representation and financial inclusion and their rights as landholders, business owners, and citizens.[20] In many countries, however, low rates of female participation in the labor force reflect the strength of inhibitions caused by gender norms, which can outweigh the opportunity for an income that provides increased economic stability and financial independence. Normative perceptions of gender-appropriate work, and fear of potential consequences or sanctions, can discourage economic activity.[21]

Gender norms also impede women's access to opportunities at different ages and stages, affecting their economic and educational options. A 2018 report explores how material deficits and dependencies perpetuated over women's life courses largely disadvantage women and girls.[22] It notes that adolescent girls (aged 10 to 19) are likely to do more work at home, face mobility restrictions, and marry early, which limits educational opportunities, social networks, and livelihood prospects. Opportunities are further inhibited by gender norms that assign childcare responsibilities primarily to women, extending throughout the prime working age (20 to 59 years), which coincide with the ages women start marrying and giving birth to and raising children.

Women's agency and economic advancement can also be affected by household composition or characteristics. Women tend to gain status within the family unit as they grow older; divorced women, single mothers, and junior wives in polygamous unions are more likely to be employed or self-employed,

out of economic necessity. These circumstances sometimes result in increased control over assets and resources. In general, however, women's life trajectory is mediated by gender norms that regulate productive and reproductive domains, increasing the risk of economic dependency throughout their lives and poverty in old age.[23]

Discriminatory gender norms dictate women's economic roles and time use activities; shape access to employment, networks, and information; and influence how different types of skills and work are valued, which affects prices, wages, and benefits.[24] The designation of men as "breadwinners" and women as "caregivers" disadvantages both men and women. Women's wages or income may be seen as "pocket money," rather than essential household income used for expenditures on health and education and overall household well-being.[25] Even where divisions of

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unpaid care and domestic work have become more egalitarian, men and women alike often see this change as husbands "helping" their wives and boys "helping" their sisters and mothers, reinforcing the overarching norm that childcare and domestic work are female responsibilities.[26] Social pressure on men to be the breadwinner can result in stress, depression, and violence. Moreover, when employment or market trends target (cheaper) female labor, endangering men's breadwinner status, they may express their masculinity by exerting "power over" women, increasing the risk of violence.[27]

Gender biases limit the extent to which women can participate economically, as well as how they benefit from the economic growth that they generate. As findings from a 2019 World Bank study underscore (Box 3), female entrepreneurs are more likely to limit investments in their enterprises because of internalized and biased gender norms. When women engage in economic activities, gender norms can affect their access to work and experiences within formal and informal workplaces, often leading to occupational segregation.[28] When women become trapped in tedious, low-productivity, low-wage, or unpaid jobs that are perceived to be appropriate for women, they may decide not to seek employment and educational opportunities or to invest in business enterprises.

Box 3. Gender norms limit the full potential of female entrepreneurs

A 2019 World Bank study that examined gender gaps in business performance in Africa identified social norms as a key factor holding back female entrepreneurs and depressing business growth—largely due to internalized gender-biased norms (against women) held by women and men alike. The study highlighted that women are more likely to value family over business, which tends to lower investment and performance levels, while men are more likely to hold biases about how and in what sector women should run a business.

Source: World Bank. 2019. *Profiting from Parity: Unlocking the Potential of Women's Businesses in Africa.* World Bank's Africa Region Gender Innovation Lab and the Finance Competitiveness & Innovation Global Practice. (Link)

2. EVIDENCE—STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

Opportunities and constraints for WEE tend to be filtered through gender norms that inhibit where, when, and whether women are employed (or self-employed)—with women more likely than men to be unemployed and over-represented in informal and vulnerable employment. While gender norms tend to be deeply entrenched and difficult to change, a growing number of studies provide evidence that positive shifts in social norms can and do lead to increased economic opportunities and agency, as well as more equal divisions of care and domestic work.[29] However, the effectiveness of these shifts and whether they are sustained may depend largely on how the change is promoted.

This section explores evidence of effectiveness among the primary approaches being used to shift social norms in support of WEE and gender equality, as drawn from literature and highlighted by key informants. These are divided into the following five typologies defined in Table 4: (1) household methodologies (HHMs), including promotion of personal agency; (2) reference groups and diffusion; (3) platforms for collective learning and action; (4) information and media; and (5) workplace and organizational social norms.

TABLE 4. TYPOLOGIES OF INTERVENTIONS	
CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Household Methodologies (HHM), Including Promotion of Personal Agency	Interventions that utilize facilitated dialogue, critical reflection, and goal setting to change intrahousehold dynamics that contribute to gender inequality and exclusion. By creating space for individuals, families, groups, and communities to identify, examine, and address harmful and deep-seated social norms, these methodologies aim to increase cooperation and support for women's power and agency.
Reference Groups and Diffusion	Interventions that rely on influential role models – reference or peer groups – to reinforce or expand acceptance of norms that support women's economic empowerment. Reference groups are context and norm specific; they are trend-setters who influence the attitudes and behaviors of target group(s), accelerating normative shifts through positive role-modeling.
Platforms for Collective Learning and Action	Platforms for collective learning and action of many forms and applied to different sectors that empower women and promote gender equality, including group-based collective action, training and education, and financial inclusion services.
Information and Media	Strategic use of mass media, information communication technologies (ICT), and digital platforms to promote agency and the uptake of different opportunities, ideas, and behaviors as part of shifting social norms in the context of WEE interventions.
Workplace and Organizational Social Norms	Organizational and business policies and practices that address discriminatory norms and advance women's recruitment and retention in employment and promotion to management and leadership positions.

The examples provide evidence of interventions with the potential to achieve sustainable shifts toward embracing positive norms in support of women's economic power and gender equality. Effective interventions are generally part of a broader integrated package of activities that combine opportunities for participatory discussions and critical reflection, communication campaigns, and economic agency interventions that reshape perceptions of what is considered appropriate or acceptable. They also

address the multiple factors and motivations that drive behaviors and underpin norms, including policy and institutional changes, access and control over resources and income, and capacity building through shared knowledge and skills.[30]

2.1 HOUSEHOLD METHODOLOGIES

Intrahousehold dynamics influence individual actions, motivations, and well-being, with implications for productivity and economic opportunities. HHMs focus on these dynamics; they have become a predominant strategy for increasing cooperation among household members, supporting personal agency, and transforming gender norms. They also generally involve all family members, not just women, in achieving gender equality and removing deep-seated social or gender norms that tend to hinder women's power and agency.

HHMs create a safe space for individuals, families, groups, and communities to identify, examine, and address underlying causes of gender inequality and exclusion, through creation of a shared vision and plan for the future. Facilitators work with family members to increase cooperation, communication, and understanding. Studies report positive outcomes including: improved use of available resources; increased productivity; more equitable workload balance between family members; reduced domestic violence; and increases in women's confidence and capacity.[31] Box 4 outlines an example of how changes in cooperation between spouses or partners increased income for the household, through improved communication that reduced intra-household competition to get products to market.

> **Box 4. Gender norms and intrahousehold inequalities**
>
> In northern Uganda, women lack independent access to resources and are dependent on a family middleman for all communication external to the household, including accessing loans and markets. This increases women's dependence on household members who are men, undermines productivity, and limits economic opportunities; it can result in competition among household members, inefficient allocation of resources, and poor information sharing.
>
> Research found that the poor quality of coffee sent to market was because women and men were picking unripe beans, in a competition to get them to market before their partners had the chance to do so. In response, the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) was introduced to household members as a way of identifying gender disparities, strengthening communication, and improving gender relations. Participating households reported more equal management of resources and increased income, with coffee buyers reporting improved quality of coffee coming to markets.
>
> Source: Hillenbrand, Emily, and Maureen Miruka. 2019. "Gender and Social Norms in Agriculture: A Review." Chapter 2 in *Gender Equality in Rural Africa: From Commitments to Outcomes. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI): RESAKSS Annual Trends and Outlook Report.* (Link)

A 2019 study conducted a "stocktaking" exercise to examine the impacts of two HHM approaches in 51 projects supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).[32] The most prevalent of the two approaches was GALS; the second was a household mentoring approach that focused on inclusion of ultra-poor households by trained mentors from the local community. The study concluded that HHMs are effective in many different contexts in generating positive changes in mindsets and behaviors, examining inequalities, and identifying practical solutions. Significant benefits from

participation in HHMs included increases in productivity, incomes, and food security, as well as improvements in decision-making, access to and control over assets, more equitable workload balance between family members, and intergenerational well-being and decision-making.

The IFAD study found that the use of HHMs was more common in projects that support value chains, agribusiness and enterprise development, and agriculture. However, these methodologies have also been adapted to other sectors, projects, and programs, including nutrition, youth engagement, village savings and credit, and climate change.[33] The main challenges identified in implementing HHMs by IFAD occurred in the initial uptake of the process, in securing sufficient resources to do it well, and in recruitment of HHM experts to meet project demand and facilitate the process. The study also noted issues with the quality of project documentation at all stages, including initial design reports as well as midterm reviews and supervisory mission reports.

Among HHMs, GALS has been most studied and appears to have the strongest track record of effective performance. GALS is a community-led empowerment methodology that has been adapted to different contexts, sectors, and issues. It was initially developed in 2007 to promote gender justice for Women's Empowerment Mainstreaming and Networking (WEMAN), with funding from IFAD. Since then, GALS has been adapted to different projects and programs, with different iterations used by over 80,000 women and men in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caucasus Region.[34]

GALS positions poor women and men as drivers of their own development, enabling them to create a joint vision and action plan to address discriminatory social norms and gender inequality, in collaboration with local organizations and government agencies or service providers. While the primary locus of action and reflection remains with individuals and communities, GALS employs a multi-level and multi-stakeholder process that can be integrated into existing activities (rather than being a one-off exercise or extra activity). It is designed to be complementary with private-sector economic development interventions and can be organically sustained and scaled through peer learning and facilitation even beyond the activity timeframe or life of the project.

Studies assessing GALS effectiveness provide evidence of significant results. One report noted: "GALS has been remarkably powerful in unseating powerful cultural norms that have existed for generations… [with] changes related to the division of both domestic and farm work, household decision-making, control and access to assets and services and decreases in alcohol abuse and violence."[35] Relevant findings include:

- **Increased incomes** (by two to eight times) for the majority of farmers, including women, due to: information sharing on improved production and marketing techniques; reduction of transport and other costs through informal collaboration (organized and decided by the farmers); and collective action on prices in markets.

- **Increased equality in land ownership**, with the number of households securing access and control of land for women increasing from nearly none to 76 percent due to linking GALS to coffee producers' Fair Trade and organic certification processes.[36]

A quantitative external evaluation of the Joint Program on Economic Empowerment of Rural Women conducted one of the few quantitative external evaluations on the impact of GALS. A comparison of two villages in Kyrgyzstan (one that participated in GALS, and one that did not) identified some differences in women's empowerment and changes in gender norms that could be attributed to GALS.[37] These included women's increased self-awareness and decision-making over the use of family income; reductions in violence; and more equal gender relations in the family, with men sharing domestic tasks and supporting the purchase of time- and labor-saving appliances.

2.2 REFERENCE GROUPS AND DIFFUSION

The existence of a social norm and the extent to which it motivates an individual to conform depends largely on the beliefs and behaviors of other individuals whose opinions matter most—i.e., reference or peer groups who can influence behavior through approval (or fear of disapproval).[38] Reference group members tend to be individuals sought out for information and advice, who provide models for individual behavior, such as friends, peers, family, romantic partners, teachers, health care providers, colleagues, a religious community, or people posting on social media.[39] Reference groups differ according to the norm and the context; they are not always the individuals who are considered most influential to the community in general.[40] Box 5 offers findings from an online survey that underscore the observation that what others do strongly influences what an individual does, suggesting that identifying reference group members and concentrating efforts on influencing the beliefs and behaviors of those people can be a crucial leverage point for triggering normative shifts.

> **Box 5. The power of observing others: What "others do" strongly influences what "I do"**
>
> A 2020 online survey on perceptions of gender norms reached 6,000 urban millennial men and women across Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The survey covered such topics as childcare and housework, men's roles as primary income earners and providers for the family, appropriate jobs and occupational segregation, and men as better leaders versus women as better support providers. Regression analysis identified that the strongest links in the norms identified were between what "I do" in relation to what "others do" (as observed among other individuals and in the media). This suggests that efforts to shift social norms should focus on positive change role-modeling in the media and among reference groups.
>
> Source: YouGov, Investing in Women Program, and Australian Aid. 2020. *Gender Equality Matters 2020: Social Norms, Attitudes, and Practices (SNAP) of Urban Millennials in Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam.*

Norms engender a sense of belonging among those who share beliefs about appropriate behavior, but this often restricts individual freedom regarding the range of choices and preferences exercised.[41] The support of reference groups can be crucial to enabling shifts in norms—especially gender norms that shape roles and responsibilities in families, such as working outside of the home and division of labor within the home.[42] Figure 2 depicts how power is at the center of norms enforcement: adherence to a norm is articulated through learning and enforced by sanctions that depend largely on the influence of power holders and reference groups.

Figure 2. Roadmap for Measuring Agency and Social Norms in Women's Economic Empowerment
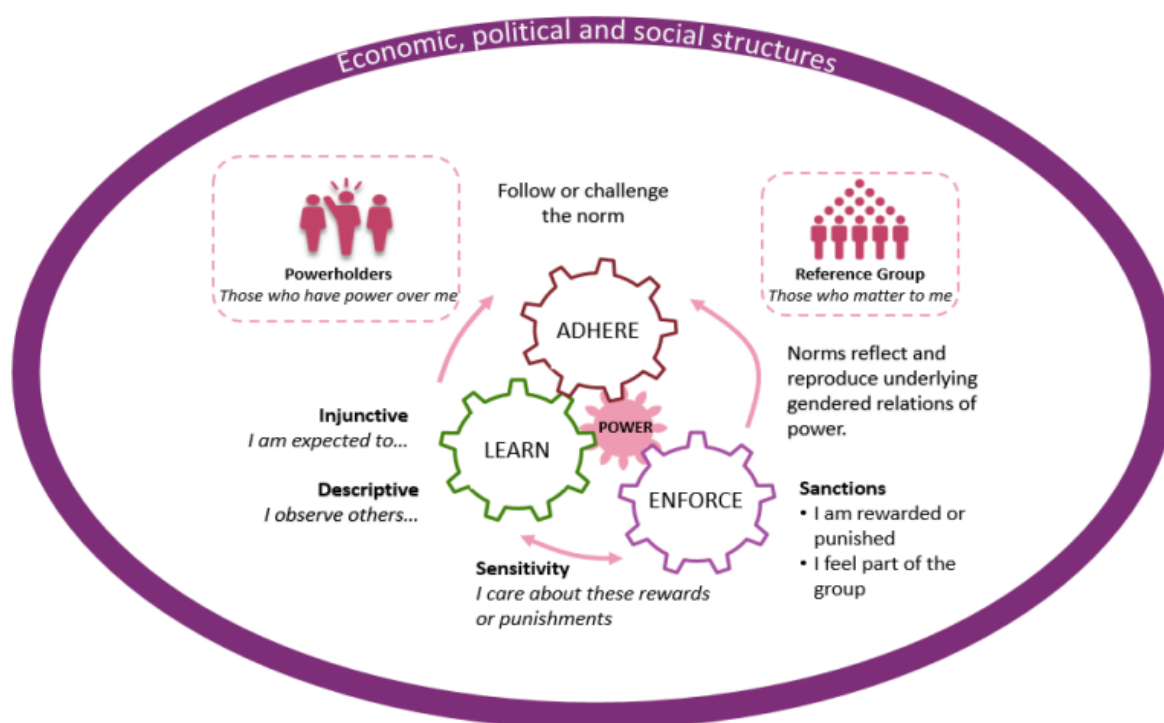
Source: Center on Gender Equity and Health. 2020. *A Roadmap for Measuring Agency and Social Norms in Women's Economic Empowerment. Evidence-based Measure of Empowerment for Research on Gender Equality (EMERGE)* (June 2020). (Link)

Shifts in social norms start to take hold when an increasing number of individuals disregard existing norms or replace them with new beliefs that enable new behaviors and shifts in collective expectations.[43] The weakening in the strength of a social norm, and concomitant changes in beliefs and behavior, can be facilitated more rapidly through identifying social networks and engaging these reference groups of cohorts and advocates within a community (see the example in Box 6). In development practice, this approach generally builds on the groundwork of HHMs or other forms of outreach that prompt critical reflection and support participant-led diffusion, which expands acceptance and builds momentum for change among an increasing cohort of individuals.

Box 6. Measuring and monitoring diffusion, qualitatively and quantitatively

Studies show a clear relationship between the amount of diffusion and the extent of social norms change within communities. Diffusion of social norms by messaging through trusted sources can be as impactful as the original message, which highlights the need for understanding and measuring diffusion and related social networks to scale impact beyond initial project participants. This includes identifying family and community members who are involved in these networks, those who are positive deviants as it relates to social norms shifts in belief and behavior, and those who might be able to act as bridges between different groups, communities, and social networks.

The Change Starts at Home Trial Program, undertaken by Equal Access, used social network approaches to identify the "who" and "how" of diffusion to better understand and evaluate this social behavior change communication program that aimed to shift the attitudes, norms, and behaviors that underpin intimate partner violence in Nepal. This approach can be key to seeing changes and patterns that more traditional sampling methods might miss. The Trial Program found that understanding interpersonal relationships in detail through qualitative data and measurement provides important insights into diffusion.

Source: Clark, Carrie, and Gemma Ferguson. 2019. "Social Norms Change Beyond Direct Beneficiaries: Research and Programmatic Lessons from the Change Starts at Home Trial." Learning Collaborative Blog Series (October 31, 2019). (Link)

The program SASA! is another well-studied example of how reference groups and participant-led diffusion can be engaged to effect changes in social norms. The program was designed by Raising Voices and was first implemented in Kampala, Uganda. Targeting traditional norms that perpetuate violence against women, the program helps communities rethink household relationship dynamics by engaging women and men to address power imbalances and transform gender relations. Violence against women and girls has devastating impacts on individuals, families, and communities, including long-term and multigenerational health, education, and economic consequences. SASA! grounds its approach in an understanding of patriarchy, to challenge unequal gendered power, strengthen the agency of women and girls, and support shifts in harmful social norms.

SASA! has been widely tested, standardized, and scaled up for application in 25 different countries by over 65 organizations that range from small, community-based groups to large multilateral institutions.[44] It is a phased community mobilization intervention that seeks to prevent violence and improve relationship values (especially mutual care and respect) through community mobilization, critical discussion, positive action, and diffusion. "Sasa" means "now" in Kiswahili, and it is also an acronym for the four phases of the approach: start, awareness, support, and action. The program identifies a partner local organization which then selects community-based activists (women and men) who are interested in issues of violence, power, and rights, as well as activists who work with the police and in health care, local government, and faith-based groups. These activists receive training in new concepts and ways to approach power imbalances. They then take the lead in organizing informal activities with their community networks to encourage open discussions and critical thinking. This helps to ensure that community members receive information from people they trust.[45] As depicted in Figure 3, these different engagements combine to support outreach and build "critical mass" momentum that enable couples to experiment with non-traditional gender roles and family structures, as a reflection of care and support within a values-based relationship.[46]

Figure 3. Achieving Critical Mass through SASA!

Source: Michau, Lori, and Sophie Namy. 2021. "SASA! Together: An Evolution of the SASA! Approach to Prevent Violence Against Women. Evaluation and Program Planning 86 (2021) 101918. (Link)

Norms around family structures fundamentally underpin traditionally gendered roles in the care economy, assigning disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work to women. This has a direct impact on women's time poverty and associated economic and social opportunity costs.[47] Women provide more than three-quarters of unpaid care while 42 percent of women globally are outside the paid workforce, in comparison with just 6 percent of men.[48] Community sanctions, including both harsh criticism toward women for "failing" to care and the shaming of men who are doing care work, reinforce unequal and gendered divisions of care work.[49]

Oxfam's WEE and Care Program (WE-Care) program has worked in over 25 countries since 2013. The program challenges prevailing gender norms in communities and encourages social movements in support of change.[50] WE-Care's champions and role-model families challenge the descriptive norm that men "do not do care work"; they counter the belief that such work is unskilled or not valuable by communicating information about the benefits of shared care to families and communities. Religious and traditional leaders who are men are also involved in promoting care work as part of men's responsibility—not as a way of husbands "just helping their wives."

A 2020 report providing a synthesized overview of key findings from WE-Care Household Care Surveys and Rapid Care Analyses offers insights into a range of factors associated with unpaid care and domestic work in low-income and low-resource settings, including the role of social norms in shifting behaviors around care work. Survey responses from the Philippines, Uganda, and Zimbabwe suggest that what

matters most in the redistribution and reduction in care work is what people think other community members *believe*, rather than what they think other community members *do*.[51] Majorities of both women and men said that men would do care work in situations where the community considered it acceptable.

Persuading more individuals to challenge social norms—thus achieving a critical mass—can be central to making sure that the change becomes embedded and is sustainable. But while beliefs and behaviors can largely be shaped or informed by perceptions of prevailing norms among peers or reference groups, these perceptions are not always accurate, especially during times of rapid social and legal change.[52] A case in point is described in Box 7, detailing the (mis)perceptions of support for female labor force participation among males in Saudi Arabia. In 2017, fewer than 15 percent of women in the country were in paid work. However, legal changes (such as lifting the ban on women driving) have started to support a more favorable environment for female employment. A 2018 online study found that most young married men (82 percent) privately supported women working outside the home, though they dramatically underestimated the level of support among *other* men in their reference group, including neighbors.[53] Once this was realized, many men changed their position and began to support women's workforce aspirations.

Box 7. Role of "belief correction" to challenge misperceptions

In a randomized control trial (RCT) of young married men in Riyadh, half of the participants changed their perception of low support for female labor force participation when they learned the true proportion of men in their community whose attitudes deviated from the social norm. To facilitate changing their prior misperceptions, research assistants—trained in "belief correction"—conducted in-person follow-up conversations with participants to share the findings on attitudes of other men in their community, and to discuss the implications for prevailing gender norms. Participants who received this "belief correction" were more supportive of their wives joining the labor force than the control group, demonstrating the importance of reference groups in determining norms and shifting behavior. This use of "belief correction" to counter misperceptions and misinformation could also be a promising approach for other norm-transformative interventions.

Source: Bursztyn, L., A. L. González, D. Yanagizawa-Drott. 2018. *Misperceived Social Norms: Female Labor Force Participation in Saudi Arabia* (NBER Working Paper No. 24736). Cited in *Social Norms Atlas: Understanding Global Social Norms and Related Concepts.* 2021. The Social Norms Learning Collaborative. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University. (Link)

2.3 PLATFORMS FOR COLLECTIVE LEARNING AND ACTION

Different platforms for collective learning and action can build support for and acceptance of positive social norms and behavioral change. Platforms take different forms depending on objectives, sectors, and context, but they share a common purpose in empowering individuals and promoting change through group learning, creating opportunities to shift social norms and advance women's economic opportunities and gender equality.

GROUP-BASED APPROACHES

Social networks or groups that bring individuals together can be influential in promoting positive shifts and normative changes, particularly for adult women and girls transitioning into young adulthood. A review of adolescent and young WEE programs highlighted that such group-based approaches show lasting improvement in incomes, self-efficacy, knowledge, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) outcomes, when they combine economic-focused interventions (such as vocational training) with empowerment-based life skills.[54] Findings suggest that programs that foster critical thinking specifically about gender and power improve SRH outcomes, and that

vocational training programs with a stronger gender focus, combined with life skills training, have better economic outcomes.

The same review cited a RCT in Bangladesh that tested three program variations for girls aged 12 to 18. All three variations included mentored safe spaces for girls' groups, along with the same life skills curriculum and community engagement, but they differed in the type or topic of training. The three areas were: (1) tutoring support in mathematics and English; (2) livelihoods training in computers, basic paramedic skills, photography, and other marketable skills; (3) gender and rights awareness to foster critical thinking about gender norms and power inequalities and to strengthen the girls' agency and communication skills. (A fourth group was a control, with no intervention). Findings from the RCT demonstrated that all three interventions reduced child marriage by 25 to 30 percent, in comparison with the control villages. The study also found that girls who participated in the empowerment and critical thinking approach (topic 3) had significantly increased labor force participation and school retention.

Another example is CARE Ethiopia's agriculture programs, Women's Empowerment: Improving Resilience, Income, and Food Security (WE-RISE) and Graduation with Resilience to Achieve Sustainable Development (GRAD), which combine WEE activities (starting with the village savings and loan model) with Social Analysis and Action, a community-mobilization model promoting dialogue around gender and social exclusion norms. A meta-analysis conducted by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) examined social norms change in Ethiopian agriculture, concluding that these two programs provide the strongest evidence of effective gender norm change models in the agricultural sector. The evaluation concluded that targeting economic empowerment through savings, loans, and agricultural productivity, and then adding the layer of gender norm change, appears to successfully stimulate discussion and norm changes within groups. This reinforces the evidence base for using group-based economic models *paired with explicit gender sensitivity programming* to enhance household outcomes for women and men alike.[55]

Group-based non-formal education programs also demonstrate promise in promoting more balanced workloads and improving gender relations. Examples include many programs based on Promundo's Program P curriculum, which have started to encourage more egalitarian norms around work and

care.[56] While the evaluations do not always measure impacts on norms, they do provide indications about trends or the direction of change. For example, the Bandebereho initiative in Rwanda, which uses Program P materials, found that men and women both reported an increase in the time men spent on household care and domestic work, though this did not decrease the time women spent on these activities.[57] Also, gender sensitization through extracurricular clubs such as the Taaron Ki Toli program in Haryana, India, has helped adolescents (both boys and girls) develop more positive views about the acceptability of women working.[58]

CARE's Pathways Program took a group-based integrated approach to enhancing production, markets, nutrition, gender equality, social norms, and climate resilience. Targeting 52,000 women smallholder farmers in six countries across Africa and Asia (Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Malawi, Mali, and Tanzania) from 2012 to 2017, it was designed to address the root causes of gender discrimination and promote equity within the agricultural sector. The program implemented collective action and learning through various groups, including farmers' field and business schools and village savings and loans; it fostered engagement of men and boys as well as community dialogues and advocacy to challenge formal policies and shift discriminatory social norms. The focus on ensuring equal opportunities for women farmers had a twofold pathway: (1) empowerment by increasing knowledge and skills through capacity building, as a necessary precondition for other significant changes including access to inputs, markets, and land; and (2) contributing to women's self-esteem, voice and agency, control over income, and well-being at household and community levels by directly engaging in dialogues around gender norms and women's rights.

Pathways was designed, in part, to test the hypothesis that directly addressing gender discrimination can drive a virtuous cycle of increased productivity, empowerment, and equity, which then leads to greater income and food and nutrition security. A social-cost benefit analysis was conducted at the end of the program in three of the African Pathways countries (Ghana, Malawi, and Mali), to determine whether challenging gender norms as part of an agricultural intervention has unanticipated outcomes and benefits that justify the intensive interventions and investments.[59] This report concluded that Pathways generated US$158 million worth of benefits in the impact areas of food and nutrition, poverty reduction, women's empowerment, and resilience to shock. It also noted that for every US$1 invested in the program, stakeholders received a US$31 return, including stakeholders not directly involved as beneficiaries. Moreover, as much as 37 percent of the total return on investment was due to gains in women's empowerment, which also contributed to gains in other impact areas.

ISTOCK

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Several forms of training and education show promise for bringing about normative shifts. A 2020 report that looks at gender, power, and progress in normative change suggests that institutionalizing gender-equitable norms into core curricula has potential for effecting transformative education on a vast scale.[60] It notes that this would need to include teacher training sensitization programs that encourage teachers (men and women) to examine their own as well as the broader society's norms and biases. Ideally,

whole-of-school approaches to gender equality can encourage staff and students to build school communities that promote gender equality as a key value, with equitable norms as a primary standard of behavior.

Multi-faceted vocational training for women and girls that includes information to counter low self-esteem and increase human capital has demonstrated effectiveness in increasing income-generating activities and delaying marriage. A RCT in Uganda examined the impact of a multi-faceted vocational training program for adolescent girls, which included information on sex, reproduction, and marriage, finding that adolescent girls in treated communities were 48 percent more likely than those in control groups to engage in income-generating activities four years after the intervention—largely through self-employment.[61]

Gender norms that emphasize women's role in the home and men's role as providers discourage women from developing an entrepreneurial identity and embracing business opportunities.[62] While not everyone can be an entrepreneur, limited employment prospects in many countries make entrepreneurship an economic necessity. Business development training programs that bring together groups of entrepreneurs and provide them assistance to set well-defined business goals (and strategies to achieve them) can support normative shifts that increase women's confidence and agency and access to finance and information. As Box 8 highlights, empowered entrepreneurship or personal initiative training (PIT) programs demonstrate greater effectiveness among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) than conventional business training, which tends to focus on financial planning, marketing, and customer services. Attention to socio-emotional skills and strategic choices or aspirations can be especially impactful for female entrepreneurs in small and growing businesses (SGBs), improving business performance and increasing profits and income.

Box 8. Personal Initiative Training impact: benefits for female entrepreneurs

In Togo, the World Bank pilot-tested a psychology-based entrepreneurship training called Personal Initiative Training (PIT). This training teaches a proactive, self-starting approach to entrepreneurship that focuses on future-oriented persistent behaviors and how to develop an "entrepreneurial mindset." Participants learn how to differentiate their enterprises from other businesses and to anticipate problems and overcome setbacks.

The impact of this training was tested through a RCT in Lome, Togo. The impact of PIT was compared to the IFC's Business Edge Training program (a more traditional business training), as well as a control group that received no training. Four surveys were conducted over a two-year period following the training program. Entrepreneurs who took the PIT increased profits on average by 30 percent relative to the control group, with Business Edge participants increasing profits on average by only 11 percent. Notably, the PIT had an even greater impact on female entrepreneurs: their profits increased by 40 percent compared to a 5 percent increase for those given traditional business training.

Source: World Bank. 2019. Profiting from Parity: Unlocking the Potential of Women's Businesses in Africa. World Bank's Africa Region Gender Innovation Lab and the Finance Competitiveness & Innovation Global Practice. (Link)

FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Financial services can be central to women's economic power and gender equality. A 2021 study by Women's World Banking (WWB) provides evidence of the interlinked and self-reinforcing impacts of social norms on financial inclusion and WEE.[63] The study used statistical modeling techniques to match a set of 17 policy and infrastructure enabling factors with available data on policy, infrastructure, social norms, financial inclusion, and WEE. It found that the most influential factors for WEE were social norms and enabling policies (such as equal inheritance rights, equal rights on immovable property, freedom of movement, and equal rights in employment). For women's financial inclusion, key determinants include: prohibition of gender discrimination in the workplace; credit registry coverage; smaller gap between men and women in using mobile and online banking; legal prohibition on dismissal of pregnant workers; and WEE. The study also found that WEE more strongly enables conditions for financial inclusion than vice versa.

Women who have access to bank accounts, savings mechanisms, and other financial services are better able to control their earnings and exercise greater autonomy in decision-making.[64] Key informants report that savings groups that promote financial literacy and bring women together around learning and loans create a pathway for collectively challenging norms and increasing access to finance. While the financial sector is increasingly taking social norms into consideration when designing and implementing programs, most of these initiatives are at best norm-aware interventions creating "workarounds" for access to financial services; they have limited effect on the norms that perpetuate discrimination and gender inequalities in financial systems.[65] This can lead to unintended negative consequences, such as loans diverted relatives who are men, additional workloads added to women's household and community responsibilities, and an increase in intimate partner violence.[66] Box 9 identifies some "smart" design features that can be integrated into training programs to attenuate these outcomes.

Box 9. Smart design for financial services and training programs

Evidence drawn from a review of recent evaluations suggests that financial services and training programs are not gender-neutral, and that specific design features can yield more positive economic outcomes for women by helping them overcome gender constraints. These features include savings and "graduation" programs that increase women's economic independence, self-reliance, and self-control; and micro-borrowing that supports financial risk-taking and choice. "Smart" design also includes high-quality business management and jobs skills training, as well as stipends and other incentives offered in these training programs to address women's and young women's additional time burdens and childcare demands. Peer support may also help to increase financial risk-taking and confidence in business decisions. However, when social norms are too restrictive, and women are prevented from doing any paid work, no design will be smart enough. Subjective economic empowerment appears to be an important intermediate outcome for women that should be promoted and more reliably and accurately measured.

Source: Buvinic, Mayra, and Megan O'Donnell. 2019. *Gender Matters in Economic Empowerment Interventions: A Research Review.* Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the World Bank. (Link) Source: World Bank. 2019. Profiting from Parity: Unlocking the Potential of Women's Businesses in Africa. World Bank's Africa Region Gender Innovation Lab and the Finance Competitiveness & Innovation Global Practice. (Link)

Banks, microfinance institutions (MFI)s, and financial technologies ("fintechs") reproduce prevailing gender norms in the ways they work and the services they provide. Criteria for accessing loans or

services are largely based on the premise that "heads of households" (usually men) have the social networks, income, and assets needed for collateral, with these practices appearing "normal" since they reflect widely held norms about men as providers and breadwinners.[67] Evidence is robust that these norms result in discrimination, as confirmed in financial models premised on women's financial inclusion, such as microfinance institutions.

A 2021 report highlights how MFIs have accommodated and reinforced existing norms around asset ownership and men's roles as the heads of households, contributing to women being limited to institutions that are not licensed, do not offer protections on savings balances, and remain outside of the national payment system.[68] In this parallel (informal) financial infrastructure, women may not be able to benefit from the legal protections of the formal financial system, increasing the vulnerabilities of women who are already more vulnerable to abusive practices, as highlighted in Box 10. Also, frontline staff tend to accept the gender norm of men's control over income and resources, undermining women's economic power. This suggests the need for MFIs to invest in changing the mindsets and practices of frontline staff, through training and communication protocols or guidelines to help them understand the dynamics of social norms.[69]

Box 10. Gender norms and men's control over microloans

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee's (BRAC) microloan product, called Dabi, is offered through group lending to women for income-generating activities. Recently, it added gender equality as a strategic pillar, which prompted a reexamination of impacts and led to the realization that loans were being used by men, often husbands, and not by BRAC's clients, who are primarily women.

This finding aligns with other studies and evaluations. A study reviewing microloan RCTs across India, Sri Lanka, and Ghana showed that loans to women entrepreneurs were frequently used to support their husbands' businesses rather than their own. Moreover, in Bangladesh, scholars have estimated that men control 90 percent of the loans distributed to women.

Source: Arnold, Julia, Mayada El-Zoghbi, and Alex Kessler. 2021. *Normative Constraints to Women's Financial Inclusion: What We Know and What We Need to Know.* Center for Financial Inclusion, ACCION (July 2021). (Link)

CARE has made transformative norms change a priority and is addressing gender norms as part of integrated programs that include financial inclusion services and initiatives. In Uganda, where underlying norms dictate women should not work outside the home, CARE has introduced a mobile wallet to help women practice mental stocktaking around the use of their finances, with subwallets earmarked for different uses. The program also introduced dialogue between men and women around intrahousehold resource management and the role of women in the paid economy. Early evaluation results show a general uptake of the subwallet accounts as well as improved self-confidence, reduced anxiety, and increased women's participation in household decision-making over time.[70]

2.4 INFORMATION AND MEDIA

Prospects for changing discriminatory or harmful social norms can depend largely on how the change is promoted and the factors that influence the uptake of different activities or ideas. Sometimes changes in social norms and behavior can be triggered by new information or a well-informed argument that

counters objections to the change, accompanied by evidence that others are willing to accept these changes.

MASS MEDIA

Mass media is being used increasingly to influence shifts in social norms toward women as economic actors. There is evidence that these media campaigns are affecting changes in banking, labor force participation, and perceptions of what is appropriate or suitable work for women. Media interventions generally rely on a combination of educational campaigns and targeted messaging that address misinformation and provide a positive alternative or new norm. Messages that are aspirational and relatable are key, because they can promote positive shifts in attitudes and beliefs among larger segments of a population, broadening perspectives and creating more acceptance of women taking on new roles—as clients, customers, employees, employers, and entrepreneurs—especially in sectors dominated by men.[71]

In Kenya, WWB partnered with "Makutano Junction," a popular television show, and three partner banks to transform misperceptions about banking.[72] WWB's in-depth market research found that unbanked low-income women were intimidated by the prospect of entering banks and opening accounts. Barriers included a lack of familiarity with banks and misperceptions about the cost and value-added of having a bank account. Women assumed that they did not have enough money to have an account, that formal banking did not offer any more value than the informal savings methods, and that literacy or familiarity with a bank was necessary to establish and access an account.

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Makutano Junction incorporated banking-related storylines into six episodes emphasizing that banking is for everyone. The episodes also explored power relations in the family and gendered perceptions around financial services. At the end of each episode, a cast member would mention the three partner banks and encourage viewers to visit them and open an account. Working with the partner banks, WWB tracked the number of accounts opened or reactivated due to the series and associated marketing efforts and conducted pre- and post-show surveys and focus groups with viewers. The project found that 83 percent of viewers reported receiving useful financial information from watching the episodes, with as many as 138,000 more low-income women reporting that they had a bank account after watching the show—a 9-percent increase in account ownership among low-income women in Kenya. Among women who did not watch the series, no change was reported.

A 2019 study based on a large-scale, representative survey of social norms for female labor force participation in three governorates of Jordan found that information campaigns highlighting hidden support for women working were effective; particularly useful were targeted messages for men, married women, and unmarried women.[73] The study disaggregated social norms into thematic clusters, empirical and normative expectations, and interpersonal expectations within the household, and used

measurements satisfying reasonable tests for internal consistency, external validity, and test-retest reliability. The survey revealed that the great majority of men and women favor women's labor force participation, although support declines under specific scenarios. Most non-working women would like a job. Among married women, the strongest correlates of working are the woman's expectations of her husband's views and the husband's personal beliefs. Among unmarried women, empirical expectations of the number of women working correlate strongest with labor force participation.

ALEX KAMWERU/USAID

Providing information to young women and their parents about monetary returns from work in different sectors has shown promise in overcoming gender norms and stereotypes about suitable jobs for men and women, encouraging young women to enter fields that are better-paid and traditionally dominated by men. Pioneering work in different sectors helps shift gender norms that prescribe "appropriate work" and question women's abilities to do some jobs—especially those usually done by men.[74]

The 2021 State of the World's Fathers Report highlights how national-level campaigns have helped to shift perceptions of who should be responsible for providing childcare in the Republic of Georgia.[75] Representative household surveys were conducted in 2013 and 2019 to capture information about men's attitudes and actions, including those related to caregiving, and measure national-level changes. Supported by the Georgian government and the UN Population Fund, a national MenCare campaign was launched in 2016, including Men Talking to Men interactive meetings and training sessions, public book readings for children by men, a TEDxYouth event on caregiving, the celebration of Father's Day for the first time in Georgia, and numerous media partnerships to promote men's involvement in caregiving. Since 2013, the proportion of men and women who agreed that caregiving tasks are the mother's responsibility declined substantially, from 81 percent to 69 percent for men and from 76 percent to 54 percent for women. Also, support for parental leave for fathers grew, with two-thirds of Georgian men and women thinking it necessary to have a law guaranteeing parental leave for new fathers. This was a big change from 2013, when 50 percent of respondents said this was unnecessary.

Various studies also provide evidence of the influence of the media and popular culture on social norms related to family size, age of marriage, and women's workforce participation. A study in Brazil found that women who watched soap operas that show small families were more likely to have fewer children than those who did not.[76] Support for women working outside the home in Mali reportedly increased by 53 percent among listeners to the Population Media Center's "Cesiri Tono," a radio drama broadcast. Evidence is also found that mass and social media initiatives showing ordinary men and celebrity role models engaging in care and domestic work have the potential to help shift norms.[77]

Mass media programming that resonates with the listener or viewer is generally more impactful if followed up with discussions and dialogue. Effective approaches combine behavior change communication activities (e.g., radio messages, drama skits, and public talks) with opportunities for interpersonal communication, participatory discussions, and critical reflection, as discussed in Box 11.[78] The tipping point is reached through discussions and information that challenge harmful norms and help individuals and groups imagine different futures.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

NANDINI HARIHARESWARA/USAID

The Internet can be used either to shift or to reinforce pervasive social norms, especially gender norms. The expanding reach of information conveyed by the Internet has the potential to connect people and to share more progressive ideas about human rights and gender equality, especially for people from communities that might never have been exposed to different belief systems.[79] However, the Internet can also fuel misinformation and misogyny, including gender trolling designed to silence and hurt women through gender-based insults, vicious language, and attacks.[80]

A 2021 report on the gender digital divide offers strong evidence that mobile and Internet access and use replicates broader patterns of social and economic exclusion.[81] Digital access can provide critical information about jobs, commodity prices, and economic opportunities, especially as online platforms enable digital marketing and sales. Entry into a digital marketplace of ideas, information, and the buying and selling of goods creates new opportunities, especially for women entrepreneurs whose mobility may otherwise be restricted. However, in some places, social norms continue to dictate women's access to and use of digital technologies, emphasizing negative connotations (i.e., use is immoral, inappropriate, and unnecessary) and reputational risks. Fearing disapproval or worse sanctions, women experience restricted access to and use of digital technologies, compounding existing gender inequalities and digital divides between men and women in terms of technology access and use. Country-level studies across much of the world indicate women are more likely to borrow or share mobile phones (usually from a male family member), less likely to use the Internet, and more likely to face restrictions on access to computers and other devices or forms of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)s.[82]

Where women have access to ICTs, evidence indicates positive outcomes. The use of financial technology is increasing financial inclusion and helping women entrepreneurs overcome credit gaps by offering opportunities to increase revenues and savings. Women who are farmers and entrepreneurs can better link directly to supply chains and negotiate fairer prices based on real-time market

information. Digital platforms can connect buyers and sellers, including through apps such as She Trades and other platforms that target women entrepreneurs and provide business development services and skills development training.

USAID Digital Strategy aims to strengthen open, inclusive, and secure digital ecosystems, by closing gender digital divides and building awareness and capacity.[83] One example of this commitment is the WomenConnect Challenge, which was designed to share best practices and ensure WEE and women's access to (and meaningful use of) digital technology. To date, 16 WomenConnect Challenge grantees are working to address barriers limiting women's access to technology and to connect nearly six million women in 16 countries.[84] A third round of the WomenConnect Challenge was announced in August 2020, with a focus on scaling up, replicability, and private sector partnerships and investment to support emerging technologies and policies. Four of the grants awarded in this round will follow up on strategies established in earlier rounds, including changing social norms and cultural perceptions and generating economic opportunities. In the future this should offer insights into how normative shifts can help to close digital divides and support WEE.

2.5 WORKPLACE AND ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIAL NORMS

Analyses of key performance indicators provide a strong business case for companies embracing policies that address discriminatory norms and advance women's employment, with some evidence of positive trends or impacts.[85] However, business policies aimed at recruiting and retaining female employees often fail because they do not adequately consider how social norms affect underlying labor market phenomena and constraints on women, including gender norms that influence labor force outcomes and limit the aspirations of women and

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girls—such as occupational segregation, wage gaps, existing low rates of labor force participation, and unpaid childcare and domestic workloads.[86]
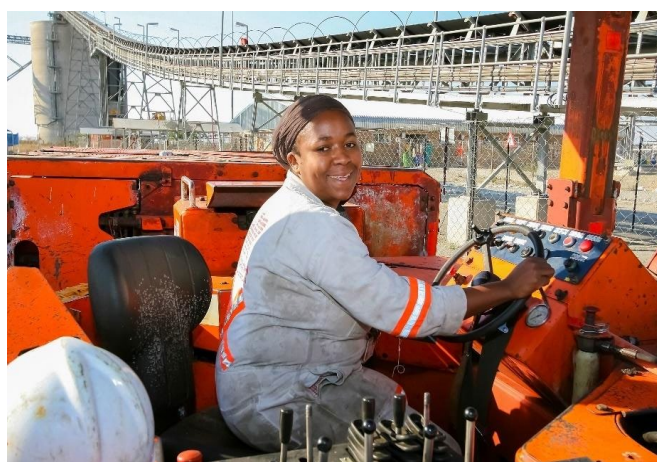
A UN report on WEE identified harmful or adverse social norms as the number one constraint to women, resulting in: discriminatory laws; failures to recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid household work and care; and lack of access to assets and resources.[87] Social norms are in turn influenced by economic conditions; they can change as economies grow or in response to structural changes, such as new laws, policies, or programs, and in response to social movements that signal greater protection and economic opportunities for women.[88] In the world of work, increasing numbers of private sector companies are addressing gender norms that discourage women from seeking employment. Examples include initiatives aimed at addressing unconscious bias in hiring and promotion,[89] mentoring and coaching to improve retention and promotion of women to leadership positions, and change management strategies designed to bring about egalitarian changes in organizational culture and leadership.[90]

Effective policy approaches tend to target social norms directly: providing incentives for change while promoting education and awareness to reinforce and promote policies.[91] The aims are to provide individuals information and knowledge that can foster changed values and behaviors. Workplace training and media campaigns combating gender stereotyping can be combined with protective mechanisms or policies to mitigate possible harmful consequences due to backlash or workplace harassment. An example of a project enabling positive shifts in social norms through women's workforce participation and gender-equitable organizational policies is USAID's Engendering Industries program.

Launched in 2015, Engendering Industries is a USAID-supported program that works with organizations in industries dominated by men to increase economic opportunities for women, improve gender equality, boost business performance, and strengthen economies (Box 12). USAID is partnering with 41 organizations spanning 27 countries, working with those organizations to co-design gender equality initiatives. Staff from partner organizations participate in Georgetown University's Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program and receive change management coaching after graduation to implement, monitor, and evaluate interventions for up to three years. Based on this curriculum and the coaching support, participants craft a capstone project that identifies gender gaps and develops a strategy for addressing these gaps. This provides staff with solid best-practice human resources tools and enables them to develop context-specific solutions.
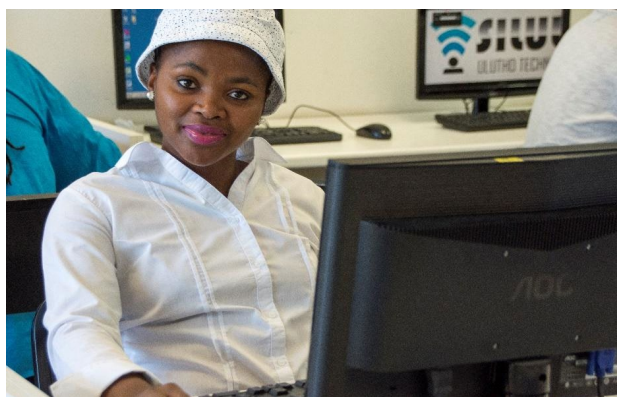
HOLLY POWERS/USAID SOUTHERN AFRICA

A recent case study examined the impacts of this approach on the Electricity Distribution Company (EDCO) in Jordan, following selected employee participation in the program at Georgetown and change management coaching with those individuals.[92] The company responded to the training by implementing an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy, bringing more women into leadership training, supporting promotion of qualified women, working with universities to attract and recruit women, and increasing the number of women who work in their headquarters and in many of their district offices. While no formal evaluation has been conducted to measure these changes, the case study notes that EDCO reports and interviews suggest evidence of incremental normative shifts about acceptable employment roles for women within the company (i.e., their ability to occupy leadership positions) and changes in gender norms that were previously part of hiring practices (i.e., overlooking women applicants in deference to applicants who were men). The resulting increase in the numbers of women working at EDCO prompted positive perceptions of women as employees and led to the hiring and promotion of more women. These women have become role models, encouraging shifts in normative expectations, including greater acceptance of women as good workers and as leaders who may be more effective at certain tasks than men and may bring new approaches to leadership.

Box 12. Utility partners gender equality achievements (FY2017–FY2020)

With support from Engendering Industries, utility partners have implemented nearly 450 actions and interventions to increase gender equality in their organizations. Highlights of these changes include the following.

- Hiring initiatives resulted in hiring over 1,115 new female employees (7 percent into leadership roles and 22 percent into technical roles).
- Over 6,105 female employees were trained on technical and soft skills to advance their careers.
- 57 best practices were adopted to improve polices and grievance management mechanisms, including anti-discrimination, gender equity, EEO, paternity leave, and anti-sexual harassment.
- 40 best practices were instituted for improving corporate culture and leadership support for gender equality, including: a male-engagement workshop for middle and senior management on the importance of being a male champion for gender equality; and the development of a blended change management model, based on the management's awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement.

Source: USAID. 2021. *Engendering Industries: Strengthening Gender Equality in Male-dominated Industries.* (Link)

Entry into any sector or field of work is often inhibited by gender norms around childcare, especially when children are young. Data from a wide range of cultural contexts and countries at different income levels show that having young children substantially reduces the likelihood of women being part of the labor force, suggesting that the availability and acceptability of using childcare services are critical to women's decision-making to enter or remain in the labor market.[93] Incentives can also be introduced through policies that support shared care within households. An example is Québec's 2006 nontransferable parental leave for fathers, a policy that contributed to reversing the social norm that mothers take sole responsibility for care work. Incentives for fathers to become more involved in caregiving increased fathers' participation in parental leave by 250 percent, and fathers' daily time spent on household work was still 23 percent higher among those households where men had used the benefit, long after the leave period ended.[94] This example highlights the importance of including men in gender equality policies.

Balancing the distribution of care is crucial, particularly for children, and this has been further underscored during the COVID-19 pandemic. Paternity leave recognizes a father's responsibility to care for his newborn children. Easing the care burden helps women's reentry into the labor market, benefits child development and well-being, and potentially contributes to more egalitarian gender norms through positive role-modeling. According to a survey on implementing gender strategies or policies in OECD countries, changing men's and boys' attitudes toward care activities is a widespread popular priority.[95] However, policies tend to neglect the importance of engaging men and boys and incentivizing them to overcome gender inequality by addressing their own gender-related vulnerabilities.[96]

3. EVIDENCE—PROVEN, PROMISING, AND POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

The evidence base for effectiveness in shifting social norms has grown over the past decade. The numbers of well-conducted RCTs, evaluations, assessments, and quantitative and qualitative studies are increasing, and more are in the pipeline. These studies offer insights into pivotal factors and effective modalities for enabling positive normative shifts. However, in comparison with the health sector, the domain of social norms and WEE remains less well studied, documented, and understood, even in programs and projects that recognize the importance of social norms in facilitating activities, interventions, and outcomes.

Many factors influence social norms, particularly as they relate to power and gender. Overall, gender-transformative and relationship-level interventions have the strongest evidence base for shifting social norms and bringing about changes in women's economic power and gender equality. These interventions include: sector-based activities combined with community mobilization, especially HHMs (such as GALS) that create opportunities for diffusion among reference groups and within communities; platforms for learning that strengthen capacity or offer market-relevant and non-stereotypical skills (including upskilling and reskilling), in combination with facilitated household and community engagement; and forms of asset building combined with gender-transformative approaches. Less effective interventions are those that target economic opportunities for women in an isolated way and do not sufficiently inform or engage other family members (especially husbands, fathers, brothers, and mothers-in-law). An exclusive focus on opportunities for women has also proved counterproductive and can increase risk of harm, including GBV, exacerbation of women's time poverty and exhaustion, and other negative unintended consequences.

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Drawing on the findings from the literature review and key informant interviews, eight interventions, are categorized below as *proven*, *promising*, or *potential* (based on the criteria outlined in Table 1). Other interventions that may be considered successful but have not been studied in a robust way (because they are newer or lack representative data) were either not reported or were ranked as promising or potential.

3.1 FOUR PROVEN INTERVENTIONS

1. **HHMs that facilitate dialogues, critical reflection, and goal setting**. These dialogues with men and women address gender inequality and promote equitable relations and dynamics within households and communities. Based on evidence drawn from RCTs, external evaluations, and multi-country qualitative studies, HHMs have demonstrated sustained shifts in social norms leading to improved relationships and cooperation within households and between partners, as well as more equitable workloads, expansion of economic opportunities and increased income, and reductions in GBV. The evidence base is strongest for GALS, but evidence is emerging from

other approaches that follow similar patterns of diagnosis, critical reflection, visioning, and action to prompt gender and norms-transformative changes.

2. **Group-based collective action and learning that increases women's productivity and financial inclusion**. VSLAs, producer organizations or cooperatives, and self-help and other groups help to shift norms around women earning and controlling income. RCTs, external evaluations, and qualitative studies found that bringing women together for group-based learning, empowerment-based life skills, and economic activities increases social and economic capital and leads to lasting shifts in gender norms, such as delays in the age of marriage, acceptance of women's engaging in markets and production, and shared childcare.

3. **Engage boys and men to change social norms, advance gender equality, and address gender-related vulnerabilities**. Engaging men and boys through entry points that appeal to men's self-interest can promote positive masculinities that focus on healthy behaviors benefiting families and communities. This includes reflecting on conceptions of "masculinities" and moving from "toxic" to "positive" definitions of what it means to be a man—such as mutual cooperation in productive and economic activities and equitable distribution of household tasks, caregiving, and decision-making. Although engaging men is a relatively new field, and much of the work has focused on preventing intimate partner violence, recognition is growing that meaningfully engaging men and boys is critical for women's economic power and gender equality by transforming the social and gender norms that reinforce patriarchy and inequality, harming both women and men. The evidence base includes evaluations, multi-country studies, and case studies.

4. **Gender analyses and norm diagnostics that identify and assess the strength of a norm and related facilitating and constraining factors**. This context-specific groundwork enables better understanding of barriers to women's economic activities and gender equality and points to potential pathways of effecting positive shifts in perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors. Analysis and diagnostics are crucial to unpacking the strength and pervasiveness of a norm and how it may have changed over time. A host of reports and program evaluations, as well as key informants, emphasize that this knowledge is essential for realizing norms transformative changes that enable women's economic power and gender equality.

3.2 THREE PROMISING INTERVENTIONS

1. **Mass media campaigns, targeted messaging, and "edutainment" that change perceptions, beliefs, and behavior**. Programming that resonates with the listener or viewer in a compelling narrative that broadens perspectives and create more acceptance of new roles and norms, particularly about what is appropriate or suitable for women. Although the evidence base comes primarily from single-country studies, evidence is increasing that mass media can and does influence perceptions of women's roles in economic activities, the workforce, and access to finance in a range of contexts and countries. Some studies suggest that mass media programming is more impactful when combined with opportunities for participatory discussions and critical reflections, such as listener discussion groups.

2. **Organized diffusion of positive normative shifts through public engagement, information campaigns, and social marketing, in coordination with policy makers**

and the private sector. Adherence to and enforcement of a social norm depends largely on others whose opinions matter most—reference or peer groups who influence individual behavior through approval (or fear of disapproval). Numerous studies point to the role of reference groups and the importance of role modeling and "positive deviance" to influence shifts in social norms. Evidence is drawn from social norms theory as well as development practice, as discussed in country-level studies, internal assessments, and evaluations. Social network analysis was also identified by key informants, and in some studies, as a viable approach to identifying members of reference groups who could potentially support broader diffusion.

3. **Multicomponent training and education initiatives aimed at shifting social norms and addressing inequalities**. These are most effective when economic-focused interventions and empowerment-based life skills are combined. Multiple studies, including some RCTs, provide evidence that information to counter low self-esteem and increase human capital has demonstrated effectiveness in increasing income through employment or self-employment and delaying the age at which women marry.

3.3 ONE POTENTIAL INTERVENTION

1. **Private sector norms, policies, and technologies that enable and motivate women's participation in the economy and workforce**.[97] Egalitarian workplace and public policies—such as childcare facilities, paternity and maternity leave, time- and labor-saving technologies and equipment, and safe, secure, and female-friendly infrastructure—show potential for shifting gender norms and creating space for women's economic autonomy through gainful employment or self-employment. Studies of key

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performance indicators also provide a compelling business case for improved productivity and profitability, based largely on cross-national data sets and private sector examples. Time- and labor-saving technologies do not necessarily lead to shifts in social norms that support gender equality and women's economic power, but they do potentially boost opportunities for women's economic engagement and autonomy.

4. SIX GAPS IN EVIDENCE

Social norms and behavior change interventions have relied on lessons learned from the health sector to inform strategies and approaches. While these health sector experiences and examples are informative, many are not applicable to norm-shifting strategies for advancing women's economic power and gender equality. Based on key informant interviews and the literature review, the following key gaps in knowledge and evidence were identified.

1. **Appropriate scope and scale for different norm change interventions.** There is little analysis or evidence that provides clear guidance on "right-sized" interventions for implementation, replication, and scalability. More information on implementation variables (e.g., duration, intensity, saturation, participant characteristics, group dynamics, and costs) is needed to initiate and sustain positive shifts in norms and to better inform optimum design, planning, and implementation.

2. **Impact of norms on women's economic activities for different social and age groups.** Few insights are provided about the impact of prevailing norms for different groups, including normative shifts correlated with age, caste, ethnicity, and locale. This is related to the lack of intersectional analysis, particularly among people with disabilities or those of diverse gender identity or sexual orientation. Group dynamics such as cohesion, competition, and power imbalances among members need to be analyzed and understood. Disaggregated data, information, and analysis are needed to more effectively monitor and evaluate impacts for different groups.

3. **Supportive norms to facilitate WEE.** While most gender norms have an inhibiting influence on women's economic activities and opportunities, some do not. For example, women sometimes benefit from stereotypes that label them as being more honest, less corrupt, and less of credit risks than men. Further analysis is needed to identify values, processes, and beliefs that could be used to leverage normative shifts that advance women's economic power and gender equality.

4. **Diffusion process and impacts.** Studies provide little information on how normative change may spread beyond the participants in the intervention. Monitoring of diffusion modalities and messengers will be needed to better understand how norms spread or shift over time and place. This should be included as a regular part of reporting, analysis, and evaluation research.

5. **Norms measurement and diagnostics.** Few programs draw on social norms theory to identify different kinds of norms or to measure the strength of those norms as they pertain to women's economic activities and related behaviors and expectations. Attitudinal change tends to be measured as an outcome, despite evidence that attitudes do not always correlate with behavior. When measurement is undertaken, few studies are explicit about the norms being measured or the evidence of their strength. Capturing signs of shifts in specific norms would provide insights into normative-change processes and impacts and should be a regular part of reporting and analysis, informing activity implementation.

6. **Longitudinal analysis to gauge sustained impact**. Few assessments or research studies incorporate repeated rounds of surveys or qualitative studies over a longer time frame. Follow-up with participants at least a year (or longer) after the end of an intervention would increase understanding of what works to sustain change and which approaches are more effective.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

A critical finding from this review is the importance of integrating norm-transformative strategies to address inequities and power imbalances, even when this is not a primary intended outcome of the program or project. Program approaches that use critical thinking, personal reflection, and interactive learning are most effective in identifying restrictive norms and embedding new ones. These are often based on gender-transformative perspectives that tackle social norms directly, rather than through indirect gender-accommodative approaches that attempt to "work around" existing gender constraints. Characteristics of more effective interventions include: (1) strong gender and power analysis, which informs implementation; (2) strong theory of change, rooted in the specific context and gender and power dynamics; (3) combined social and economic empowerment components; and (4) gender-transformative approaches informed by feminist principles that expand human choice and opportunities by addressing inequalities and discriminatory social norms.[98]

The value of well-grounded, context-specific understandings of social norms was strongly underscored both in the literature and by key informants. Effectiveness often hinges on how well social norms are diagnosed, understood, and integrated into program design, implementation strategies, and activities. Human resources, and support for their work, are also crucial. More specifically, capable facilitators and gender specialists are needed whose work is supported by senior staff and who can engage project participants and other staff members in correcting the misinformation that often underpins harmful or discriminatory norms, while facilitating dialogues that promote uptake of alternative or new positive norms.

Drivers of normative shifts (also referred to as enablers, or tipping-point levers) include:

- **collective learning and action** that build women's confidence, transfer knowledge, and promote a greater sense of self-esteem and personal initiative
- **behavior change interventions** that support agency and engage household members and peers in community dialogues and critical reflection
- **organized and participant-led diffusion** that spreads and builds a critical mass in favor of positive normative shifts
- **positive deviant role models** in compelling radio or television dramas and advertisements that resonate with listeners or the audience
- **media campaigns combined with locally targeted outreach efforts**, such as discussion groups with identified reading and discussion tasks and awareness-raising through trainings or workshops
- **egalitarian workplace and organizational norms** that provide protections against discrimination, increase opportunities for women, and encourage men's caregiving roles to better balance household and care economy responsibilities
- **services and infrastructure** that address access, security, and mobility concerns
- **access to information and the promotion of egalitarian gender norms** among students in textbooks and teaching
- **social movements**, especially women's or feminist movements, that promote and act on change

While there is evidence of effectiveness for each of the above drivers in shifting social norms, they generally are not implemented as stand-alone approaches or strategies. The most effective approaches to produce normative shifts and advance women's economic power and gender equality are multi-component social and economic interventions, including facilitated engagements to counter misinformation, change perceptions and narratives about harmful or discriminatory norms, and help individuals realize the benefits of positive norms for all.

Table 5 provides a summary of overarching findings and recommendations for social norms integration in programming.

TABLE 5. SOCIAL NORMS INTEGRATION IN THE PROGRAM CYCLE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
FINDINGS	RECOMMENDATIONS
PLANNING AND DESIGN	
Normative change approaches need to be grounded in a context-specific understanding of opportunities and constraints.	**Conduct context-specific gender analysis to initially identify facilitative or inhibiting normative expectations,** including how they influence behavior and action and what levers or approaches are best suited for bringing about positive shifts. Social norms are defined by collective and emergent behaviors and expectations within reference groups; understanding how they differ from individual attitudes, beliefs, and values is critical for designing effective change strategies and approaches.
Little analysis has been done to help determine "right-sized" norms-shifting interventions (i.e., duration, intensity, saturation, participants, and costs).	**Conduct research and analysis focused on understanding the scale and scope needed to initiate and sustain positive shifts in social norms** to inform optimum design, planning, implementation, and potential for replication and scalability.
Gender norms tend to be more entrenched or "sticky" than other social norms, generally requiring a holistic transformative approach to achieve positive shifts and mitigate risks of sanctions (i.e., violence or ostracism).	**Integrate gender norms-transformative design and implementation strategies, combined with careful monitoring and flexible adaptive programming, to mitigate risks, do no harm, and avoid negative unintended consequences.**
Multi-component interventions are more effective than single-component ones in advancing WEE and gender equality.	**Support design of multi-component interventions that combine social and economic packages (e.g., income and asset creation) with facilitated reflection and critical analysis among family members, peers, and local leaders** to counter misinformation and change narratives around harmful and discriminatory social norms.
IMPLEMENTATION	
Human resources are central to facilitating cognitive shifts in mindsets, especially skilled facilitators and coaches.	**Prioritize cultivation of skilled facilitators and/or coaches in budgeting and implementation.** This should also include training programs to support the reorientation of program staff in addressing conscious and unconscious biases stemming from discriminatory and harmful norms.

Most analyses of social norms focus on inhibiting norms rather than supportive norms that could be used to promote and advance women's economic power and gender equality.	**Identify values, processes, and beliefs that could be used to support normative shifts for advancing women's economic power and gender equality** (e.g., women sometimes benefit from stereotypes that label them as being more honest, less corrupt, and a better credit risk than men).
Few programs identify different kinds of norms and measure the strength of those norms as pertain to women's economic activities and related beliefs and behaviors.	**Work with communities in assessing strength of norms to better identify potential and actual shifts in beliefs and behaviors**. Social norms have a diversity of strengths that affect the potential for change (e.g., how common, how strong an influence over behavior, and if there have been changes over time). Capturing indications of initial shifts (evidence of weakening) in specific norms provides insights into normative-change processes and impacts, and should inform adaptations in implementation.
Engaging men is crucial for achieving sustained shifts in social norms, especially as relate to gender norms that pertain to families and households.	**Engage men and boys as potential champions and allies by reinforcing positive masculinities that advance WEE and gender equality.** Men (and women) can be powerful norms enforcers and/or change agents and it is important for programs to consider how social norms, especially sticky gender norms, affect men and women alike.
Focus on positive norms as alternatives to harmful and discriminatory norms is more effective in changing mindsets and behaviors.	**Support well-informed messaging and deliberations that provide new information, counter misinformation, offer positive alternatives or new norms, and provide evidence that others are willing to accept the change.** Sometimes, prospects for changing discriminatory or harmful norms can largely depend on how the change is promoted and the factors that influence the uptake of different activities or ideas.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

Norms are not well-defined, hampering diagnostics, measurement, and evaluation of impacts.	**Use norms diagnostics frameworks and surveys to identify, measure, monitor, and evaluate strength of social norms and evidence of any weakening or shifts.** Hypothetical vignettes tend to be most effective for encouraging open responses. These focus on questions about perceptions of "what others do," rather than direct experience as a way of exploring perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors.
Analysis is lacking about how norms affect different social groups depending on age, ethnicity, caste, and locale, as well as the different types of group dynamics.	**Norm diagnostics should incorporate analysis of differences in the impact of prevailing norms among different groups and normative shifts correlated with age, caste, ethnicity, and locale.** Also, improve documentation of dynamics within and among groups (i.e., cohesion, competition, or power-imbalances among participants).
Although there is consensus that diffusion is important in triggering and sustaining normative shifts, few studies track how change is or may spread beyond the individuals directly participating.	**Monitor diffusion modalities and messengers to build an evidence based for understanding how norms spread and/or shift over time and place as part of regular reporting for monitoring and evaluation.** Reference or peer groups have a strong influence on the behavior of others who seek their approval or fear disapproval. Social network analysis can be used to identify members of reference groups who could increase potential and support for broader diffusion.
Longitudinal analyses are needed to gauge sustained impact but are lacking in most studies and evaluations.	**Incorporate repeated rounds of surveys and qualitative studies over a longer timeframe and at the end of an intervention (a year or longer) as part of program design and monitoring and evaluation to increase understanding and evidence of what works to sustain change and which approaches lead to better results.**

ANNEXES

ANNEX A: Key Terms and Definitions

ANNEX B: Key Resources

ANNEX C: Organizations Working on Social Norms (In Supplemental Document)

ANNEX D: Design, Methodology, and Limitations (In Supplemental Document)

ANNEX E: Documents Consulted for Literature Review (In Supplemental Document)

ANNEX A: KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Agency. The capacity of individuals to make their own free choices and act independently on them, including having the resources and physical ability needed to perform the behavior and the power to do so. The degree of agency may determine whether an individual challenges or adheres to a social norm that is misaligned with their personal attitudes. Agency applies to individuals and groups (i.e., individual agency and collective agency) and is often used synonymously with self-efficacy (the perceived ability to deal with a task or situation). Self-efficacy is a primary requirement for agency. Even if the necessary resources and power are available to someone, if they do not perceive they can make changes in their life, they will not be inspired or motivated to act or deal with a task or situation.[99]

Digital finance. Digital technology that provides access to financial products such as payment platforms, savings, and credit.[100]

Discriminatory social norms. Norms that reinforce gendered identities based on stereotypes and that determine power relations that constrain women's and men's behavior in ways that lead to inequality.[101]

Gender-based Violence (GBV). An umbrella term for any harmful threat or act directed at an individual or group based on actual or perceived biological sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or lack of adherence to socially constructed norms around masculinity and femininity. It is rooted in structural gender inequalities, patriarchy, and power imbalances. GBV is typically characterized by the use (or threat) of physical, psychological, sexual, economic, legal, political, or social coercion, control, or abuse. GBV impacts individuals across the life course, and it has direct and indirect costs to families, communities, economies, global public health, and development. GBV takes many forms and can occur throughout the lifecycle. Types of GBV include female infanticide; child sexual abuse; sex trafficking and forced labor; sexual coercion and abuse; neglect; domestic violence; elder abuse; and harmful traditional practices such as early and forced marriage, honor killings, and female genital mutilation and cutting.[102]

Gender digital divide. The inequalities between men and women in technology access and use. It is the distinction between those who have Internet and/or mobile phone access and can make use of digital communications services, and those who are excluded from these services.[103]

Gender equality. Concerns fundamental social transformation, working with men and boys, women and girls, to bring about changes in attitudes, behaviors, roles and responsibilities at home, in the workplace, and in the community. Genuine equality means expanding freedoms and improving overall quality of life so that equality is achieved without sacrificing gains for persons regardless of their gender.[104]

Gender equity. The process of being fair to women and men, boys and girls, by ensuring that measures are taken to compensate for cumulative economic, social, and political disadvantages that prevent women and men, and boys and girls, from enjoying a level playing field.[105]

Gender norms. A subset of social norms that are shaped by patriarchy. Gender norms are socially constructed, based on collective beliefs about what behaviors are appropriate for women and men and the relations between them. They set socially held standards for a range of important decisions that individuals make throughout their lifespans. Like social norms, expectations and perceived rules dictate how to behave based on an individual's biological sex and social perceptions of their gender, which are used to justify and reinforce social differences and inequalities. Individuals who adhere to these norms may be rewarded by social acceptance and inclusion, while those who do not conform to these norms may face consequences such as social exclusion, violence, or even death.[106]

Gender-transformative Approaches. Policies, interventions, and programs that seek to transform gender relations to promote equality by: (1) critically examining inequalities and gender roles, norms, and dynamics; (2) strengthening norms that support equality and an enabling environment; (3) promoting the position of women, girls, and marginalized groups; and (4) transforming the underlying social structures, policies, and broadly-held social norms that perpetuate gender inequalities.[107]

Inclusion. An organization's effort and practice of welcoming, socially accepting, valuing, and equitably treating groups and individuals from different backgrounds. These differences may be readily apparent, such as national origin, age, race and ethnicity, religion/belief, gender, and marital and socioeconomic status, or they could be more inherent, such as educational background, training, sector experience, organizational tenure, and even personality (such as introvert or extrovert). Inclusion often means a shift in an organization's mind-set and culture that has visible effects, such as on participation in meetings, how offices are physically organized, or access to particular facilities or information.[108]

Injunctive norms. Behaviors that an individual is expected to follow and expects others to follow, usually maintained both by the threat of disapproval or punishment for norm violations and through norm internalization. They are what one "ought" to do in a social situation, even if doing so is against one's immediate interests.[109]

Intersectionality. Multiple and interdependent social identities of individuals (or groups), such as race, class, religion, age, disability, sexuality, and gender, that affect lived experiences of discrimination, disadvantage, or relative privilege.[110]

Normative expectations. Individual beliefs about what others in their reference group think should be done.

Norms-shifting interventions. Activities or interventions that aim to facilitate shifts in harmful norms or foster new norms, to alter social expectations about a behavior or set of behaviors. Such approaches may include critical reflection and analysis of social norms by communities and groups that can result in positive new norms rooted within the values of that group. These interventions often complement other strategies to change behavior.[111]

Patriarchy. A structure of power relations that shapes gender norms and that privileges men's political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property and assets.[112]

Positive masculinities. A term used to characterize the values, norms, and practices that gender-based work with men and boys seeks to encourage, to promote positive outcomes and to end violence against women and girls.

Power. Power refers to the ability to influence the beliefs, norms, and behaviors of others or the trajectory of events. Power permeates within social, political, and economic structures. It can take formal (such as an elected position) or informal (such as the elders of a village) forms, and either explicit (through a country's constitution or laws) or implicit (men's privilege). Power can manifest subtly and overtly, informing access to or control over resources, social networks, opportunities, and benefits from community structures and government policies. Power dynamics are rooted in social hierarchies that create and reinforce themselves, and are evident within advantages accumulated by one group over time and across generations. Power hierarchies often create the impression that the current order is natural and inherent. Individuals and groups who consider their power inherent may perceive efforts to shift norms as a threat to their power, and accordingly attempts to shift norms may result in backlash.[113]

Reference groups. Others whose behavior and opinions matter enough to influence or shape an individual's normative beliefs and behavior.[114] Reference groups are those whose approval is desired and whose disapproval is feared. They include people sought out for information and advice, who influence attitudes, behaviors, and decisions and after whom behavior is modeled. Social norms inherently rely on reference groups (with whom we identify and to whom we compare ourselves), to enforce behaviors through punishment or reward. Examples of reference groups are friends, peers, family, romantic partners, teachers, health care providers, colleagues/co-workers, a religious community, or people posting on social media.[115]

Role model. A person identified as an example to be imitated or emulated, and whom people look to that informs what behaviors are considered acceptable. Role models may be someone an individual knows, a member of their reference group, or a public figure or celebrity. Social norms interventions use role modeling to shape perceptions and publicize positive or desired shifts in attitudes and behaviors.[116]

Social norms. Shared rules of action that define what is considered normal and acceptable behavior for members of a group, held in place by empirical and normative expectations and enforced by social sanctions. Social norms are constructed by shared expectations and often unsaid beliefs about what people do and what they should do. These are embedded in formal and informal institutions, as well as in attitudes and behaviors that guide how individuals interact in society, the economy, and within the household. In the context of markets, norms influence the control of productive assets; accordingly, gendered occupational roles and care responsibilities often limit women's ability to engage with and benefit from economic opportunities.[117]

Social sanctions. Positive or negative responses or reactions by others to an individual's behavior. Positive sanctions include being admired within the community or granted higher status. Negative sanctions include scolding, gossiping, and threats of physical aggression and/or sexual violence. The anticipation of how others will respond to compliance or non-compliance with social norms affects behavior.[118]

Stereotypes. Standardized mental pictures that are held in common for members of a group and that represent an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or unexamined judgment.

Women's economic empowerment and gender equality *(working definition)***.** Women's economic empowerment exists when women can equitably participate in, contribute to, and benefit from economic opportunities as workers, consumers, entrepreneurs, and investors. This requires access to and control over assets and resources, as well as the capability and agency to manage the terms of their own labor and the benefits accrued. Women's economic equality exists when all women and girls have the same opportunities as men and boys for education, economic participation, decision-making, and freedom from violence. This requires collectively addressing barriers to commercial activity and labor market participation, such as: restrictive laws, policies, and cultural norms; infrastructure and technology challenges; unpaid care work; limits on collective action; and poorly enforced protections. Women's economic equality is just one facet of gender equality more generally, which requires attention to the full range of gender gaps—economic, political, educational, social, and otherwise.[119]

ANNEX B: KEY RESOURCES

The key resources of this study are presented below, organized by sector, measurement and diagnostic, NGO/implementing partner, and private sector engagement.

TABLE B1. KEY RESOURCES		
SECTOR RESOURCES	DESCRIPTION	WEBSITE
Cislaghi, Beniamino, and Lori Heise. 2020. *Gender Norms and Social Norms: Differences, Similarities, and Why They Matter in Prevention Science.*	Discusses two streams of theory and practice as they pertain to social norms and gender norms. Examines how the two streams intersect, the key differences and similarities, and why it matters.	(Link)
Harper, Caroline, Rachel Marcus, Rachel George, Sophia D'Angelo, and Emma Samman. 2020. *Gender, Power and Progress: How Norms Change.* London: ALIGN/Overseas Development Institute (ODI).	Identifies a general pattern of progress toward gender equality, starting with educational achievement and moving on to greater control over fertility, participation in the labor force, and finding a political voice. For gender norms around paid and unpaid care, the report notes that promising approaches to shift the norms that limit women's economic participation include: community, school, and workplace-based education on gender equality, equal care roles, and the prevention of violence; the use of mass and social media to build momentum for norm change; and the development of good-quality affordable childcare services. It also emphasizes that these approaches need to be backed up by policies that can normalize women's participation in the labor force, such as the expansion of decent work opportunities.	(Link)
Hillenbrand, Emily, and Maureen Miruka. 2019. "Gender and Social Norms in Agriculture: A Review." Chapter 2 in *Gender Equality in Rural Africa: From Commitments to Outcomes.* International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPR)I: RESAKSS Annual Trends and Outlook Report.	Provides an overview of social norms definitions and disciplinary approaches as well as insights into the relationship between Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and gender norms, particularly in agriculture. Also offers examples of what works for transforming social norms, with implications for agriculture programming.	(Link)
Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University. 2019. *A Landscape Review: Addressing Social Norms in Six USAID Sectors.*	Provides a landscaping review of social norms programming across selected sectors at USAID: Agriculture and Food Security, Education, Energy and Infrastructure, Land and Urban Development, Technology, and Water Sanitation and Hygiene. The report highlights that many programs lack an explicit approach to normative change and notes that monitoring and evaluation of normative components is largely absent. Concludes with recommendations for USAID.	(Link)
Marcus, Rachel. 2021. "Gender, Social Norms, and Women's Economic Empowerment." In *Women's Economic Empowerment: Insights from Africa and South Asia.*	Draws on findings from the more than 50 research outputs from the Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) Program, which generated a wide set of insights on social norm-related barriers to and enablers of WEE, with a particular focus on women's access to assets, employment, and entrepreneurship.	(Link)
Social Norms Collaborative. 2021. *Social Norms Atlas: Understanding Global Social Norms and Related Concepts.* Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University.	Provides a broad introduction to social norm concepts, including 10 sector-specific sections on illustrative social norms, behaviors, and attitudes, and a cross-sector analysis highlighting meta-norms that cut across different sectors. Identified as a "starting point" for program planners, implementers, evaluators, and researchers interested in building their social norms vocabulary and knowledge to strengthen their understanding of sector-specific social norms.	(Link)

MEASUREMENT AND DIAGNOSTICS RESOURCES	DESCRIPTION	WEBSITE
Center on Gender Equity and Health. Evidence-based Measure of Empowerment for Research on Gender Equality (EMERGE). 2020. A Roadmap for Measuring Agency and Social Norms in Women's Economic Empowerment.	Provides guidance for the operationalization and measurement of agency and social norms as they relate to WEE. Consolidates concepts and underpinnings across disciplines to develop a comprehensive framework for guiding the measurement of agency and social norms in WEE.	(Link)
Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University. 2019. *Resources for Measuring Social Norms: A Practical Guide for Program Implementers.*	Serves as a guide for planners and implementers whose programs include norm-shifting interventions or who wish to better understand the social norms that affect the behaviors they seek to change. Most of the examples and tools are from projects that focused on adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health, but they are also relevant for other sectors, with useful guidance on how to develop and use good social norm measures.	(Link)
Samman, Emma. 2019. *Quantitative Measurement of Gendered Social Norms.* Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms.	Provides an overview of quantitative measurement of norms, a field still in an early stage of developing standards and methods and establishing how measures link to outcomes. Recommends that quantitative approaches to norm measurement be accompanied by qualitative data gathering, such as anthropological observation, the discussion of vignettes, and in-depth interviews and focus groups.	(Link)
Social Norms Learning Collaborative. 2021. *Monitoring Shifts in Social Norms: A Guidance Note for Program Implementers.*	Provides insights and recommendations on how to monitor social norm shifts in community-based programs, drawing on a review of literature, experiences, and learning. Intended for practitioners across sectors who are responsible for designing, implementing, and monitoring social and behavior change programs.	(Link)

NGO/IMPLEMENTING PARTNER RESOURCES	DESCRIPTION	WEBSITE
CARE. 2017. *Applying Theory to Practice: CARE's Journey Piloting Social Norms Measures for Gender Programming.*	Focuses on CARE's journey of drawing on social norm theory in applying learning in development practice, including different tools and measurement approaches to better inform design and implementation.	(Link)
GIZ, Oxfam, and Women's Empowerment Mainstreaming and Networking (WEMAN). 2014. *Gender Action Learning System: Practical Guide for Transforming Gender and Unequal Power Relations in Value Chains.*	Gives an overview of Gender Action Learning System (GALS) in value chain development, highlighting the vision and analytical frameworks as well as the capacity needed. It summarizes the process and steps for catalyzing change, sets out a process for participatory and gender-sensitive scoping and mapping of a value chain, and offers suggested steps for negotiating gender-equitable win-win strategies in value chains.	(Link)
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). 2019. *Stocktake of the Use of Household Methodologies in IFAD's Portfolio.*	Presents findings from a review of Household Methodologies (HHM) activities and results in the IFAD loan portfolio. HHMs are used to promote gender equality and livelihood development. IFAD is one of the leading development organizations using HHMs as a key strategy to advance its gender and broader development agenda, with over 50 IFAD projects across the five regions that make provisions for the use of HMMs. The aim of the report is to take stock of what has been done.	(Link)
Klassen, Mike, Holly Shakya, Ben Cislaghi, Erin Markel, Scott Merrill, Marcus Jenal, and Raksha Vasudevan, et al. 2017. *Social Norms in Market Systems Development: A Practitioner-led Research Brief.*	Captures the experiences of practitioners interested in integrating knowledge on social norms from fields outside of market systems (i.e., representatives from MarketShare Associates, CARE International, Habitat for Humanity International, and ACDI/VOCA). Outlines key ideas from social norm theory and	(Link)

	explores implications for research and implementation of market systems development programs.	
Singh, Nisha, Anam Parvez Butt, and Claudia Canepa. 2018. *Shifting Social Norms in the Economy for Women's Economic Empowerment: Insights from a Practitioner Learning Group.* Oxfam and SEEP Network.	Provides an introductory overview of social norms and their relationship to WEE. It also highlights practical tools, approaches, and frameworks that practitioners and researchers can use to diagnose, measure, and change social norms. Notes the need for more systematic collaboration and learning to address social norm change as part of WEE, which is still a new area of exploration.	(Link)
PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES	**DESCRIPTION**	**WEBSITE**
Arnold, Julia, Mayada El-Zoghbi, and Alex Kessler. 2021. *Normative Constraints to Women's Financial Inclusion: What We Know and What We Need to Know.*	Brings together the evidence of what is known about norms and financial inclusion, using cases to demonstrate aspects of and approaches to addressing discriminatory norms throughout the financial system. Highlights many remaining areas for further inquiry on norms and financial services that would enable improved WEE.	(Link)
Engendering Industries. 2021. *Delivering Gender Equality: A Best Practices Framework for Male-dominated Industries.*	Offers guidance for workplaces, particularly those in male-dominated industries. It is based on global best practices and practical resources to identify gaps, define objectives, and establish a road map for sustained progress in integrating gender equity throughout operations and corporate structures. Drawing on the Employee Life Cycle, the framework focuses on workplaces and employees, but also recognizes the societal and sector context, including the influence of norms, beliefs, and practices within organizations that pervade workplace culture and impact opportunities.	(Link)

[1] UN Secretary General's High-level Panel of Women's Economic Empowerment. 2016. *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment.* (Link)

[2] Marcus, Rachel. 2018. *The Norms Factor: Recent Research on Gender, Social Norms, and Women's Economic Empowerment.* Overseas Development Institute, London, U.K. (Link)

[3] McKinsey Global Institute. 2015. *The Power of Parity: How Advancing Women's Equality Can Add $12 Trillion to Global Growth.* (Link)

[4] Heise, Lori, and Manji, K. "Social Norms," 2016. DFID, *Professional Development Reading Pack,* No. 31, Applied Knowledge Services, 2016. (Link)

[5] Harper, Caroline, Rachel Marcus, Rachel George, Sophia D'Angelo, Emma Samman. 2020. *Gender, Power and Progress: How Norms Change.* London: ALIGN/ODI. (Link)

[6] Cislaghi, Beniamino, and Lori Heise. 2020. "Gender Norms and Social Norms: Differences, Similarities, and Why They Matter in Prevention Science." *Sociology of Health and Illness,* Vol. 42, No. 2:407–422.

[7] Malhotra, Anju. 2021. "Reflections on Gender Norms and Systemic Change." WEDGE, University of Maryland, College Park. (Link)

[8] IRH. 2019. *Resources for Measuring Social Norms: A Practical Guide for Program Implementers.* Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University. (Link)

[9] Klasen, Stephan. 2018. *The Impact of Gender Inequality on Economic Performance in Developing and Emerging Countries,* Discussion Paper No. 244. Göttingen: Courant Research Centre, Poverty, Equity and Growth. (Link) Cited in Marcus, Rachel. 2018; *The Norms Factor: Recent Research on Gender, Social Norms, and Women's Economic Empowerment.* ODI and International Development Research Center (IDRC). (Link)

[10] Social Norms Learning Collaborative. 2021. *Monitoring Shifts in Social Norms: A Guidance Note for Program Implementers.* Washington, D.C. (Link)

[11] Ibid.

[12] IRH. 2019. *Resources for Measuring Social Norms: A Practical Guide for Program Implementers.* Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University. (Link)

[13] Samman, Emma. 2019. Quantitative Measurement of Gendered Social Norms. Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms. (Link)

[14] In 2019, the SIGI methodology established a new criterion for the computation of gender discrimination, with 27 categorical and continuous variables combined into 16 indicators and four dimensions (discrimination in the family, restricted physical integrity, restricted access to productive and financial resources, and restricted civil liberties). These are averaged using exponential and logarithmic functions to compute the level of discrimination in the social institutions for each country and territory. While the index does not analyze individual and collective influences on behavior, it does signal the likely presence of norms in numerous indicative variables and highlights the importance of norms for wellbeing. Ferrant, G., L. Fuiret, and E. Zambrano. 2020. The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2019: A Revised Framework for Better Advocacy. OECD Development Centre Working Papers, No. 342, OECD Publishing, Paris.

[15] CARE. 2017. *Applying Theory to Practice: CARE's Journey Piloting Social Norms Measures for Gender Programming.* (Link)

[16] IRH. 2020. Social Norms Exploration Tool. Passages Project: ALIGN. (Link)

[17] Oxfam. 2018. Social Norms Diagnostic Tool. Empower Youth for Work. (Link)

[18] Marcus, Rachel. 2018. *The Norms Factor: Recent Research on Gender, Social Norms, and Women's Economic Empowerment.* Overseas Development Institute, London, U.K. (Link)

[19] Marcus, Rachel. 2021. "Gender, Social Norms, and Women's Economic Empowerment." In *Women's Economic Empowerment: Insights from Africa and South Asia,* edited by Kate Grantham, Gillian Dowie, and Arjan de Haan, pp. 126–153. Routledge Studies in Development and Society. (Link)

[20] Harper, Caroline, Rachel Marcus, Rachel George, Sophia D'Angelo, Emma Samman. 2020. *Gender, Power and Progress: How Norms Change.* London: ALIGN/ODI. (Link)

[21] Singh, Nisha, Anam Parvez Butt, and Claudia Canepa. 2018. *Shifting Social Norms in the Economy for Women's Economic Empowerment: Insights from a Practitioner Learning Group.* Oxfam and SEEP Network. (Link)

[22] Kabeer, Naila. 2018. *Gender, Livelihood Capabilities, and Women's Economic Empowerment: Reviewing Evidence over the Life Course.* Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) Program, UK aid. (Link)

[23] Ibid.

[24] Singh, Nisha, Anam Parvez Butt, and Claudia Canepa. 2018. *Shifting Social Norms in the Economy for Women's Economic Empowerment: Insights from a Practitioner Learning Group.* Oxfam and SEEP Network. (Link)

[25] UN Women. 2013. *A transformative, stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment: Imperatives and key components. UN Women.* (Link) Cited in Hillenbrand, Emily, et al. 2015. *Measuring Gender-transformative Change: A Review of Literature and Promising Practices.* CARE USA for WorldFish and the CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems (October 2015). (Link)

[26] Harper, Caroline, Rachel Marcus, Rachel George, Sophia D'Angelo, Emma Samman. 2020. *Gender, Power and Progress: How Norms Change.* London: ALIGN/ODI. (Link)

[27] Hillenbrand, Emily, et al. 2015. *Measuring Gender-transformative Change: A Review of Literature and Promising Practices.* CARE USA for WorldFish and the CGIAR Research Program on Aquatic Agricultural Systems (October 2015). (Link)

[28] Marcus, Rachel. 2018. *The Norms Factor: Recent Research on Gender, Social Norms, and Women's Economic Empowerment.* ODI and IDRC. (Link)

[29] CARE USA. Measuring Gender-Transformative Change: A Review of Literature and Promising Practices, 2015; Miller, Dale T. and Deborah A. Prentice. "Changing Norms to Change Behavior." *Annual Review of Psychology*, 67, 339–361, 2016; Cislaghi, B. et al. Changing Social Norms: The Importance of Organized Diffusion for Scaling Up Community Health Promotion and Women Empowerment Interventions." *Prevention Science* 20:936–946, 2019; and WomenConnect Challenge Webinar Series, 2021, *Digital Frontiers Steps to Success Series: Challenging Social Norms and Cultural Perceptions.* (Link)

[30] IRH. 2019. *A Landscape Review: Addressing Social Norms in Six USAID Sectors.* Washington, D.C.: Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University for U.S. Agency for International Development. (Link)

[31] IFAD. 2019. *Stocktake of the Use of Household Methodologies in IFAD's Portfolio.* IFAD Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division (ECG). (Link)

[32] The 51 projects all had some HHM-related activities, 37 of which were ongoing. Most of the projects were in East and Southern Africa, with others in Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Near East, North Africa, Europe and Central Asia, and West and Central Africa.

[33] IFAD. 2019. *Stocktake of the Use of Household Methodologies in IFAD's Portfolio.* IFAD Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division. (Link)

[34] Mayoux, Linda. 2014. *Rocky Road to Diamond Dreams: GALS Process Catalyst Manual.* OxfamNovib and WEMAN (March 2014). (Link)

[35] GIZ, Oxfam, and WEMAN. 2014. *Gender Action Learning System: Practical Guide for Transforming Gender and Unequal Power Relations in Value Chains.* (Link)

[36] GALS at Scale. (Link) Also, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has published a review of experiences in the cocoa and coffee supply chains, which highlights GALS as a particularly impactful approach: FAO et al. 2019, *Changing the Terms of Women's Engagement in Cocoa and Coffee Supply Chains,* Rome, Italy. (Link)

[37] Kosheleva, Natalia. and Elmira Kerimalieva. 2018. Final evaluation of the Kyrgyzstan Joint UN Women/FAO/IFAD/WFP Program on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women. (Link)

[38] Mackie, Gerry, Francesca Moneti, Holly Shakya, and Elaine Denny. 2015. *What Are Social Norms? How Are They Measured?* New York, NY: UNICEF. (Link)

[39] IRH. 2019. *Social Norms and AYSRH: Building a Bridge from Theory to Program Design. Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change.* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University. (Link)

[40] CARE. 2017. *Applying Theory to Practice: CARE's Journey Piloting Social Norms Measures for Gender Programming.* (Link)

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[44] Michau, Lori, and Sophie Namy. 2021. "SASA! Together: An Evolution of the SASA! Approach to Prevent Violence Against Women." *Evaluation and Program Planning* 86 (2021) 101918. (Link)

[45] Raising Voices and the African Women's Development Fund. 2019. *Preventing Violence against Women: A Primer for African Women's Organisations*. Kampala, Uganda. (Link)

[46] Michau, Lori, and Sophie Namy. 2021. "SASA! Together: An Evolution of the SASA! Approach to Prevent Violence Against Women." *Evaluation and Program Planning* 86 (2021) 101918. (Link)

[47] Addati, L., U. Cattaneo, V. Esquivel, and I. Valarino. 2018. *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work*. Geneva: International Labour Organization. (Link)

[48] Ibid.

[49] Rost, L., and S. Koissy-Kpein (2017). *Infrastructure and Equipment for Unpaid Care Work: Household Survey Findings from the Philippines, Uganda and Zimbabwe*. 2017 Household Care Survey. Oxfam. (Link)

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[98] Oxfam uses feminist principles to guide its work, focusing on redressing historical power imbalances between women and men by challenging power relations and discriminatory social norms that devalue women and girls in all their diversity (and also have negative impacts on men and boys). They invest in transformative change interventions that often require collective action and strategies to effect change at multiple levels: "within ourselves, within households, within society, and within institutions." Oxfam Canada. September 2018. Oxfam Feminist Principles: What they are and how they serve as guidepost for our work. (Link)

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[119] This is not an official definition of USAID or any other organization but rather a practical working definition that provides sufficient clarity in pursuing USAID's economic goals for gender equality and female empowerment. The definition can be found on the women's economic empowerment and gender equality wiki: ([Link])