

VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN
AND GIRLS
HELPDESK

DFID GUIDANCE NOTES



SHIFTING SOCIAL NORMS TO TACKLE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG)

JANUARY 2016 | MICHAELJON ALEXANDER-SCOTT, EMMA BELL, JENNY HOLDEN



About this Guidance Note

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Who this note is for

This guidance note is intended to support DFID advisors and programme managers with evidence, relevant examples and practical guidance on how to address harmful social norms in the context of programming to prevent VAWG.

About the Violence against Women and Girls Helpdesk

The Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Helpdesk is a research and advice service for DFID (open across HMG) providing:

- Rapid Desk Research on all aspects of VAWG for advisers and programme managers across all sectors (requests for this service are called “queries”). This service is referred to as the “VAWG Query Service”.
- Short term VAWG expert Country Consultancy support in DFID programme countries including research and advice on programme design, formation of programme documentation, implementation, review and evaluation; referred to as “Short-term Country Assignments”;
- Technical Guidance Material primarily targeted to DFID staff, but also useful across HMG and development partners;
- Strategic Engagement and support to the DFID VAWG Team.

Previous Guidance Notes produced by the VAWG Helpdesk include:

- [Addressing VAWG through security and justice programming](#) (2013)
- [Addressing VAWG in education programming](#) (2014)
- [Addressing VAWG through economic development and women’s economic empowerment](#) (2015)
- [Addressing VAWG through health programming](#) (2015)

The Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Helpdesk Service is provided by an alliance comprising of Social Development Direct, ActionAid, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Womankind Worldwide and a wider roster of experts. For further information, please contact: enquiries@VAWGHelpdesk.org.uk

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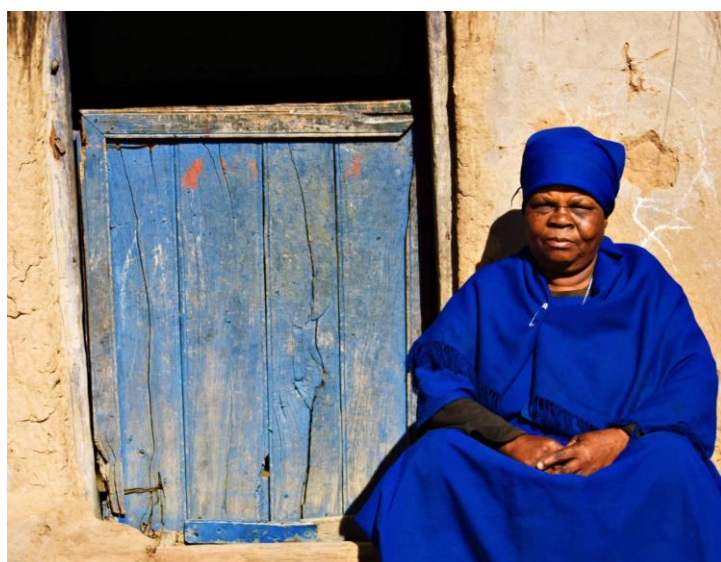
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1.0 Introduction

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is the most widespread form of abuse worldwide, affecting on average one third of all women globally in their lifetime.¹ VAWG undermines the mental and physical health of women and girls, violates their human rights and can have a negative impact on long-term peace and stability.² In line with its international and national commitments, preventing VAWG is a top priority for the UK Government and DFID.³

Although the development community has long recognised the importance of attitudes, norms, and beliefs that justify violence and gender inequality in perpetuating violence against women and girls (VAWG), there has often been a lack of clarity about the definitions of and relationships between these constructs and the practical implications for programme design and evaluation. This Guidance Note therefore aims to clarify these constructs, summarise the role of social norms in sustaining harmful behaviours and contributing to VAWG, and provide practical guidance and advice for DFID advisors and programme managers on how to identify and address harmful social norms in the context of programming to prevent VAWG.

Much research and best practice on social norms interventions derives from programmes designed to tackle harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) and Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM). This Guidance Note will focus primarily on tackling the harmful social norms that underpin perpetration of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and non-partner sexual violence, given the high prevalence of these types of violence and the limited practical guidance that currently exists on designing and implementing effective programmes.



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This note recognises that the evidence base on what works to tackle social norms that drive violence is at an early stage in scope and scale, although progress is being made through initiatives such as the DFID-funded What Works to Prevent VAWG programme.⁴ The evidence base is limited for two key reasons. Firstly, until recently, very few programmes have used social norms theory to guide programme

¹ WHO, MSC and LSHTM (2013)

² Ibid.

³ DFID (2014)

⁴ www.whatworks.co.za

development. Secondly, there has been a lack of consensus on the key metrics with which to measure social norms change, and robust evaluations of programmes (even those can be classed as social norms interventions post hoc) are very scarce. This Guidance Note therefore focuses on ‘promising practices’ for programme design and provides practical guidance on monitoring and evaluation, so that DFID programmes can both benefit from and contribute to the emergent evidence base.

This Guidance Note is to be read in conjunction with DFID’s [Theory of Change on Tackling Violence against Women and Girls](#) and builds on previous DFID Guidance Notes including [A Practical Guide on Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls](#).⁵ It also complements the recent World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society and Behaviour, by the World Bank, which provides an in-depth introduction to behavioural science and its impact on, and implications for, development programming. This Guidance Note is also intended as a practical companion to the upcoming DFID *Topic Guide on Behavioural Economics and Social Norms*.

This Guidance Note draws on social norms theory and the work of women’s rights organisations and social justice movements with practical experience in this area, as well as behavioural science, behavioural economics and social network theory⁶, where most appropriate.

⁵ DFID (2012a, 2012b)

⁶ Social network theory looks at how groups of people interact and influence each other. See Christakis and Fowler (2011)

2.0 Executive Summary

Box 1: Drivers of VAWG

No single factor alone causes VAWG. It is caused by a combination of drivers operating at different levels of the social ecology. These risk factors include a person's genetic predisposition, developmental history and attitudes or beliefs; their relationships and household dynamics; community factors such as social norms and levels of poverty; and macro-level factors such as religious ideologies, gender regimes, and market forces that affect realities at all the other levels.

Source: Heise (1998; 2011)

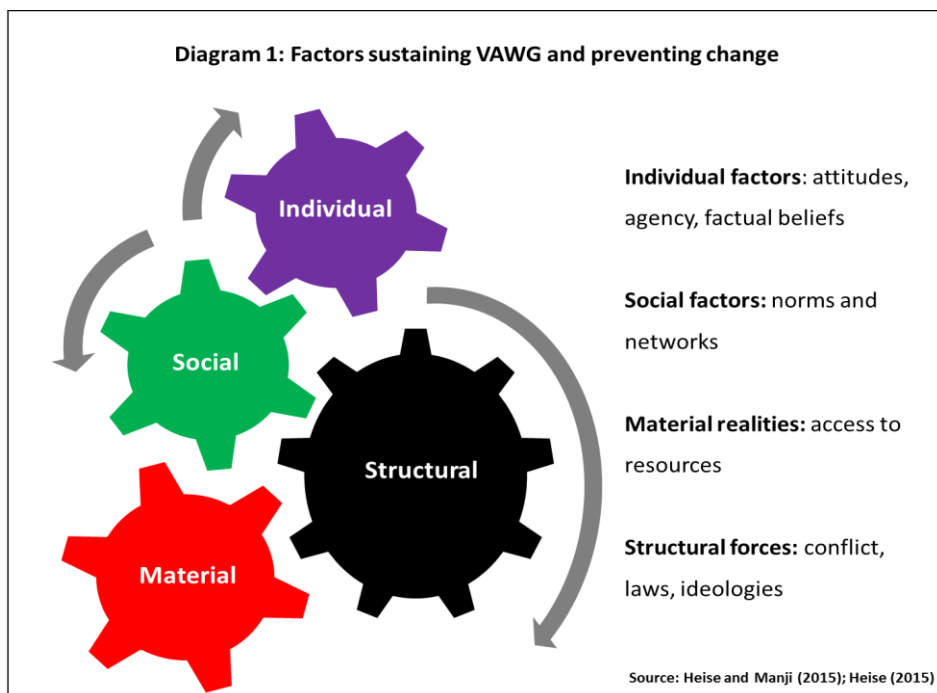
1. Social norms are shared beliefs about what is typical and appropriate behaviour in a valued reference group. They can be defined as a rule of behaviour that people in a group conform to because they believe: (a) most other people in the group do conform to it; and (b) most other people in the group believe they ought to conform to it.
2. These beliefs shape mutual expectations about appropriate behaviours within the group, and in turn the actual behaviour of groups of individuals. As a result, these behaviours are said to be 'inter-dependent'.
3. What an individual believes others expect of him or her (and the sanctions and rewards that may follow) can be a more powerful driver, or constraint, than individual attitudes, or the law. As a result, a social norms intervention can be a catalytic addition to an existing programme focused on individual, structural and/or material factors.
4. In order to tackle harmful social norms, interventions need to create new shared beliefs within an individual's reference group, which in turn change expectations around behaviour.
5. Whilst not all forms of violent behaviour are held in place by specific social expectations about the behaviours themselves, all forms of VAWG are sustained by gender norms that embody gender inequality and unequal power relations.
6. VAWG interventions that aim to transform these gender norms and inequalities have proven more effective at reducing violence than those that only address individual attitudes and behaviours without tackling harmful gender norms (such as harmful notions of masculinity) which perpetuate VAWG.
7. Although social norms are different from individual attitudes, factual beliefs and behaviours, they can be diagnosed, measured and evaluated by amending existing research strategies and methodologies, such as qualitative focus groups and quantitative surveys.
8. Emerging evidence and insights from practitioners suggests that in order to shift harmful social norms programmes need to: a) shift social expectations not just individual attitudes, b) publicise the change and c) catalyse and reinforce new norms and behaviours.

3.0 The role of social norms in driving VAWG

3.1 A combination of factors sustain VAWG

For those designing programmes to tackle VAWG, it is important to recognise the interlocking factors that *prevent change from happening* and to design interventions and strategies that address the most relevant factors in any given context.

Diagram 1, provides a simple visual diagram of the elements of the ‘social ecology’ that may interact to drive and sustain harmful behaviours:



- **Structural forces**, such as conflict, weak or discriminatory legal and institutional frameworks, racism, rules about who can own and inherit property and gender ideologies⁷ that underpin gendered differences in power;⁸
- **Social factors**, such as harmful social and gender norms;⁹
- **Material realities**, such as household poverty and lack of economic opportunities for women and girls and weak infrastructure;¹⁰
- **Individual factors**, such as inequitable gender attitudes condoning VAWG and mistaken factual beliefs, as well as women’s agency, aspirations, and self-efficacy.¹¹

3.2 Social norms can act as a ‘brake’ on social change

Historically, VAWG programming has focused on the individual factors or the material factors. For instance, empowerment programmes focused on expanding the aspirations of women and girls and building their agency (individual level), savings and loans groups (material), and advocacy to change discriminatory or punitive laws or introduce new laws protecting women and girls (structural).

⁷ Gender ideologies are ‘A world view of what gender relations should be like’. Marcus and Harper (2014) and El Bushra and Sahl, (2005).

⁸ Marcus and Harper (2014)

⁹ Heise (2011)

¹⁰ Structural and material factors shape the choices that individuals can make – they are fundamentally about power, although power dynamics are manifest across all factors. See Heise (2015) and Marcus and Harper (2014).

¹¹ Heise (2011); Heise and Manji (2015)

Less common, although receiving increasing attention, have been ‘social norms approaches’ which capitalise on the tendency for humans to ‘think socially’¹², and recognise and address social motivations of violent behaviour. Whilst addressing each of the ‘cogs’ (diagram 1) is important for sustained prevention of VAWG, evidence suggests that when social norms hold in place certain behaviours, the behaviour is unlikely to change without addressing social motivations. In this way, social norms can act as a ‘brake on social change’. This explains why changes in legal and material circumstances, or changes in individual knowledge and attitudes, may not lead to changes in levels of experience and perpetration of violence.

3.3 Definition of social norms

There are many definitions of social norms from a range of theoretical perspectives and academic disciplines and different terminologies are used.¹³ However, most approaches agree that social norms have three important components:¹⁴

1. **Social norms are shared beliefs about others.** This includes a) beliefs about what others in a group *actually do* (i.e. what is typical behaviour) and b) what others in a group think others *ought to do* (i.e. what is appropriate behaviour). These beliefs shape the ‘social expectations’ within a group of people.

Because social norms are shared beliefs about others, these beliefs can sometimes be incorrect.¹⁵

Firstly, people may mistakenly think behaviours are more typical than they are. Secondly, a majority of a group may privately reject a behaviour, but adhere because they incorrectly assume everybody else thinks it is appropriate.¹⁶

2. **Social norms exist within reference groups.** A ‘reference group’ or ‘reference network’ is the group of people important to an individual when he or she is making a particular decision.¹⁷ It is important to note that the reference group may be dispersed and distant, rather than concentrated and located in physical proximity to the individual making the decision. For example, those committing ‘honour killings’ in European diaspora communities are not necessarily concerned about the expectations of local neighbours when killing ‘dishonoured’ daughters, but of wider networks of relatives and family.¹⁸
3. **Social norms are maintained, in part, by approval and disapproval within the reference group.** Those who violate norms within a reference group are likely to be sanctioned or punished by the group, whereas those who comply may be rewarded. Sanctions can range from direct punishment to loss of opportunities via ostracism.¹⁹ The desire to conform to social expectations of a reference group, and the implicit or explicit threat of sanctions, means social norms can be more persuasive and salient in some situations than other factors such as the threat of more formal punishment by the state. It also means that norms to comply with certain expected behaviours can override legal prohibitions. For example IPV is still common in many countries where the practice is illegal.

¹² See World Bank Group (2015)

¹³ See Marcus and Page (2014a) for an overview of several theoretical standpoints.

¹⁴ Heise and Manji (2015); Mackie et al (2014), drawing on the lecture slides of Penn-UNICEF social norms training

¹⁵ Ball Cooper and Fletcher (2013)

¹⁶ In social psychology, this is known as “Pluralistic Ignorance”: the majority disapproves of a behaviour but assumes everyone else approves. See Bicchieri et al (2014); Mackie et al (2014); Mackie and Moneti (2014)

¹⁷ Bicchieri (2015)

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Elster (2007); Bicchieri (2015); Mackie et al (2014)

Box 2: This Guidance Note uses the following definition of a ‘social norm’:

A rule of behaviour that people in a group conform to because they believe:

- a) Most other people in the group **do** conform to it (i.e. it is typical behaviour) AND
- b) Most other people in the group believe they **ought to** conform to it (i.e. it is appropriate behaviour)

Source: adapted from Bicchieri (2006) and Heise (2013)

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3.4 Violent behaviours are held in place by social norms and unequal power relations

A violent behaviour can be said to ‘be a social norm’ (or more accurately ‘held in place by social norms’), when there are shared beliefs that the violent behaviour is both typical and appropriate, and consequent expectations in a reference group that the behaviour will be adhered to. For example, there is a growing body of evidence about the role of social norms in sustaining FGM/C. In the case of FGM/C, if a family’s daughters do not undergo the practice, there may be severe sanctions and even ostracism by the wider community, including a refusal to sanction a marriage.²¹

Other violent behaviours, such as IPV, may not necessarily be held in place by social norms specifically relating to IPV i.e. there may not be social expectations that a man hits his wife, and husbands may not sanction another man for refusing to do so. However, where IPV is highly prevalent, evidence suggests that there are other social norms underpinning this behaviour, for example around *gender roles, power and the wider acceptability of violence* that contribute to shared expectations around a man’s use of violence.²²

Box 3: Examples of social and gender norms that support violence against women and girls

- A man has a right to assert power over a woman and is considered socially superior;
- A man has a right to physically discipline a woman for “incorrect” behaviour;
- Physical violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflict in a relationship;
- Intimate partner violence is a “taboo” subject;
- Divorce is shameful;
- Sex is a man’s right in marriage;
- Sexual activity (including rape) is a marker of masculinity;
- Girls are responsible for controlling a man’s sexual urges.

Source: WHO (2010)

²⁰ The social norms literature uses different terminology to refer to broadly similar constructs about what is believed to be typical and appropriate. Bicchieri (2006) introduced the terms empirical expectations (i.e. what is typical) and normative expectations (i.e. what is appropriate) whilst Cialdini et al (1990) use the terms descriptive norms (typical) and injunctive norms (appropriate).

²¹ Although there may also be other contributing factors to the sustaining of a practice such as FGM/C, for instance the livelihoods and financial incentives for ‘cutters’ to continue the practice.

²² WHO/LSHTM (2010)

Most of these are **gender norms** – widely held beliefs about what is typical and appropriate behaviour for men and women, and boys and girls i.e. gender norms are a category of social norm. Gender norms shape how men and women see themselves as men and women, their social and intimate relationships, their sexuality and the allocation of power and resources.

Violence is often, although not always, a part of dominant constructions of masculinity in many societies.²³ If there are social expectations that men control women, then physical and sexual force are often seen as ‘legitimate’ ways to exert this control. This control also extends to punishment and sanction of those who resist, rebel or transgress gender norms, such as public shaming of female adulterers, homophobic and anti-lesbian violence. This helps to explain why men are the primary perpetrators of violence and why women are so often the victims, but also why sexual minorities are frequently the victims of gender violence.²⁴

3.5 Transforming gender norms and power relations is one of the most effective ways of tackling VAWG

Emerging evidence on the effectiveness of interventions to tackle a wide range of VAWG suggests that interventions that address gender norms, behaviours and inequalities, and challenge dominant notions of masculinity linked to controlling and aggressive behaviours are more effective at reducing VAWG than those that do not.²⁵ Such interventions are usually termed ‘gender transformative’ (See section 7 for examples of best practice). Even when it appears that financial factors are driving a practice, such as early marriage, it is the gender norm or ideology that dictates that the institution of marriage offers a single avenue of protection for girls. Further, evidence suggests that interventions working with men and women (and boys and girls) are more effective at reducing violence than single-sex interventions.²⁶ Social norms around gender, power and violence are adhered to by both men and women and boys and girls, as such it is critical to involve both sexes in a gender transformative intervention.

Therefore a gender transformative approach explicitly tackles social norms around gender, power and violence, but also broader ideas, attitudes and values around male superiority and what it is to be a ‘real man’ or ‘real woman’. I.e. rather than focusing solely on social norms, it is an integrated and multi-faceted approach to tackling gender inequality and power relations.

This relationship between changes in social norms related to gender power relations and gender equality and changes in VAWG is stressed in DFID’s Theory of Change:

‘Because gender inequality and unequal power relationships between women and men are the root cause of violence against women and girls, social change that shifts these is vital for reducing and ultimately eliminating violence against women and girls.’²⁷

²³ Jewkes, Flood and Lang (2014)

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Fulu, Kerr-Wilson and Lang (2014)

²⁶ Fulu, Kerr-Wilson and Lang (2014); Jewkes, Flood and Lang (2014)

²⁷ DFID (2012a)

4.0 Diagnosing, identifying and measuring social norms

Programmes which aim to prevent and respond to VAWG, should be informed by context-specific diagnosis of the specific combination of individual, economic, social and structural factors sustaining VAWG and acting as barriers to change.²⁸

4.1 Distinguishing between social norms, attitudes and behaviours

As part of a broader diagnosis of the drivers of violence, it is important to distinguish how social norms differ to other commonly used constructs such as attitudes, behaviours, and moral and legal norms. Table 1 below summarises some of these distinctions.

Social norms: Widely held beliefs about what is typical and appropriate in a reference group. Social norms may or may not be based on accurate beliefs about attitudes and behaviour of others.

Behaviours: behaviours are what someone actually does, whereas social norms are beliefs about what other people do and what other people think should be done. Although they are separate (a belief and an action), they are linked: often a social norm will influence a behaviour, and a behaviour can influence a social norm.

Because of this, in order to shift social norms, *‘interventions must create new beliefs within an individual’s reference group so that the collective expectations of the people important to them allow new behaviours to emerge.’*²⁹

Personal attitudes: whereas a social norm is a shared belief, an attitude is a ‘tendency to evaluate something (a person, symbol, belief, object) with some degree of favour or disfavour’.³⁰ For instance, ‘I think it’s fine to hit my wife if she burns food or refuses sex’. Individual attitudes are unlikely to direct behaviour for the majority of people in a reference group when social expectations contradict it (although there will always be some ‘positive deviants’ and change-agents whose behaviour defies norms). For instance, a boy may not want to hit his girlfriend for flirting with another boy, but fears his friends will

Table 1: Distinctions between social norms and other forms of beliefs

Beliefs about others	Personal beliefs
What is typical in my reference group What is appropriate in my reference group <div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle; margin-left: 10px;"> } } } </div> Social norm	What I favour/disfavour - Attitude What I believe to be morally right/wrong - Moral Beliefs What I believe to be true/false - Factual beliefs

Source: Adapted from Bicchieri et al (2014) and Heise and Manji (2015)

²⁸ Michau et al (2014)

²⁹ Heise and Manji (2015)

³⁰ *Ibid*

think less of him if he does not control her.

Moral norms: moral norms (or moral beliefs) tend to be ‘more motivated by conscience than social expectations’ and relate to deeply-held values rather than a matter of judgement or taste associated with personal attitudes.³¹ For instance, ‘I do not hit my wife because I believe it is morally wrong to do so’ or ‘Thou shalt not kill’.

Legal norms: while social norms are informal rules of behaviour and enforced through group approval and disapproval, legal norms are formal rules of the game, commanded by the state, and enforced through coercion. For example, national laws against domestic violence.

Whilst it is important to recognise the difference between social norms, attitudes, moral norms, and laws, they are not mutually exclusive, and can often reinforce each other. Over time, what an individual once did because of social expectations can become internalised and adhered to because of internal motivations, regardless of what others think. I.e. a social norm can become a moral norm.³² Behaviours are most entrenched when they are held in place by moral, legal and social norms, and as such programmes should ultimately look to influence all three.

Table 2: Primary reasons for individuals to adhere to a social, moral and legal norm (from Mackie et al 2014, drawing on the work of Antanas Mockus)

	Legal Norms	Moral Norms	Social Norms
Positive Reasons	Legitimacy of authority, respect for the law	Good conscience	Approval
Negative Reasons	Authority’s penalties	Bad conscience	Disapproval
A typical emotion in a violator	Fear	Guilt	Shame

4.2 Diagnosing social norms

In order to assess whether social norms are sustaining violent behaviours, we want to know if people follow the behaviour because they believe others do it (typical), and/or because they think others expect them to do it (appropriate).

As such, identification and measurement of social norms requires different questions and metrics compared to the measurement of individual attitudes and behaviour, but this can be accomplished by amending existing research strategies and methodologies.³³ When measuring social norms, the purpose is to uncover these beliefs about others - regardless of whether these beliefs are correct.

The following questions can act as a guide whilst developing a hypothesis and exploring whether or not a pattern of behaviour is driven by social norms.

- Whose opinion matters to the target population? I.e. who is the reference group?
- Is the behaviour perceived as typical among the reference group?
- Is the behaviour perceived to be appropriate among the reference group?

³¹ Mackie et al (2014)

³² *Ibid*

³³ For instance, Knowledge, Attitude and Practice surveys can be amended to also include specific questions on Social Norms.

- Are there consequences from departing from this behaviour? (i.e. social sanctions)
- Would the majority of people still act this way even if others disagreed? (i.e. social vs moral norm)

It may be possible to develop hypotheses from existing data, such as the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). For example, if a practice is more prevalent in one location or ethnic group regardless of economic status than another nearby this may suggest a geographic or ethnic reference group with unique social expectations. Or if the behaviour is prevalent in some areas despite individual attitudes being against it, this might suggest 'Pluralistic Ignorance' is present, whereby people are conforming in the mistaken belief that the majority supports it.³⁴

Researchers may also aggregate collective behavioural and attitudinal data at a neighbourhood or village level as proxy indicators for social norms. However, this is just an approximation and would be merely suggestive of social norms, as individual attitudes may contradict social expectations. Further research would be needed to verify the presence of norms and their extent within a population.

4.3 Identifying reference groups

The reference group are people that matter to an individual's choices. Reference groups shift depending on the issue at hand, so it is important to identify at the programme design stage the most influential reference group(s) for a particular behaviour. It is often intimately linked to an individual's identity.

Reference groups can be identified with both qualitative and quantitative methods. For example questions such as '*who do you ask about..?*' or '*list 5 people who are important to you when making decisions about your relationship?*' can be simple ways to identify particular types of people who influence decision making. Social network analysis³⁵ can also be used to help identify the reference group and analyse who is most influential within a particular group, and how a programme may shift reference groups over time.³⁶ Analysis of reference groups can yield important insights for VAWG programming, as shown in the example in box 4, but it is not an exact science. Individuals are likely to be influenced by multiple reference groups across different behaviours at any one time.

Box 4: Simple survey method for basic reference group information

A study by USAID Guinea wanted to know the reference group for the FGM/C decision among urban Guineans. The study was a simple survey of people in the major cities of Guinea, gathering descriptive data, and it asked whom the respondent consults about more important issues. They found that lower-income individuals lived in ethnically homogeneous neighbourhoods, that for more important decisions the respondent was oriented to the rural community of origin and its notables, and they were less exposed to communications media. Higher-income individuals lived in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods away from extended families; more important decisions were oriented to friends, co-workers, media figures, and houses of worship; and were much more exposed to media messages. Thus, in urban Guinea, a FGM/C abandonment program should be oriented to one kind of reference group for lower-income individuals and another kind of reference group for higher-income individuals.

Source: CRDH (2008)

³⁴ Mackie et al (2012)

³⁵ For more insights on social network analysis see Fowler and Christakis (2009) Valente (2010) and Paluck and Shepherd (2012)

³⁶ It is important to note that it is possible that reference groups may shift as a result of an intervention – for example women's self help group (SHGs) programmes may foster new relationships which supersede existing relationship. Therefore, it is important that changes in reference groups are measured over time.

4.4 Using qualitative methods to identify norms and example questions

The easiest way to identify the presence of social norms is through qualitative research and conversations with local level stakeholders and men and women, to specifically explore social expectations around a particular behaviour, reference groups and the consequences, if any, of noncompliance. Qualitative methods provide an opportunity to discover some of the nuances and specific contexts in which social norms operate. Practitioners suggest that vignettes of hypothetical scenarios (rather than directly asking respondents about constructs like social expectations) are most likely to elicit beliefs and expectations among a reference group, and also provide space in the conversation for unexpected findings.³⁷ These methods can also be used to evaluate a programme as part of a mixed-methods approach.

Jakobsen (2015) outlines a number of scenarios that have proved useful in stimulating discussion around community wide beliefs and social expectations around IPV:

- A young woman comes to tell you she's had enough of being beaten and wants to stop it. What would you say?
- A man tells you he beat his wife yesterday. What might he tell you for you to chastise him about it? What might he tell you for you to say that he was right to do so?
- A man says he would never beat his wife. What do you think of this man?
- Do women sometimes get beaten without deserving it? Can you give me some examples?
- What should one do if one hears one's neighbour beating his wife?

Analysis of focus group transcripts including both areas of agreement and contention can reveal social norms.³⁸ For instance, responses to scenarios in focus group settings such as 'people would think badly about them' or 'this would bring shame on the family' suggest social norms are present. Social approval and disapproval can be useful indicators of social norms – they are simpler to explore than people's ideas of what other people think they should do.³⁹ Involving local level stakeholders in programme design stage is essential to understanding the specific context and the specific nature of the norm: exactly when it operates and among whom.⁴⁰

Box 5: Measuring social norms using qualitative methods: Experience of Tostan

Researchers analysed transcripts from human rights education sessions of the Tostan community empowerment programme in Senegal as part of the evaluation approach. Statements such as "everyone agrees" and phrases such as 'honour' and 'shame' were used as proxy indicators of social norms, and showed how gender norms shifted as a result of the programme.

Source: Cislighi, Gillespie, Mackie, 2014

³⁷ Jakobsen (2015)

³⁸ Bicchieri et al (2014)

³⁹ Mackie and Moneti (2014)

⁴⁰ For specific guidance on qualitative techniques and exercises to explore social and gender norms, see Samuels et al (2015).

4.5 Using quantitative methods to identify norms and example indicators

Although social norms measurement within development programming is relatively rare, a number of DFID programmes are beginning to apply social norms theory to M&E of VAWG interventions.⁴¹

Table 3, overleaf, outlines example indicators and questions which could be used to measure a social norm around the acceptability of wife beating.⁴² These common outcome areas and indicators can be incorporated into an M&E framework and, depending on the approach to evaluation, could be used to assess programme impact on social norms, for example as part of a baseline and endline.⁴³

⁴¹ For example, the DFID India 2013-2016 Evaluation of the Madhya Pradesh Safe Cities Initiative, being implemented by Social Development Direct and Columbia University.

⁴² Adapted from the DFID What Works to Prevent VAWG Programme upcoming guidance on common outcome measures, and the DFID India 2013-2016 Evaluation of the Madhya Pradesh Safe Cities Initiative. For further examples of survey questions which have been used to measure social norms please see Paluck and Shepherd (2012), Shell-Duncan (2010).

Table 3: Example measures, indicators and survey questions for measuring social norms around IPV⁴⁴

Measure	Example Indicators	Example questions
Individual attitudes towards IPV	Proportion of men/women who agree with the statement 'If a woman disobeys her husband she should be beaten' ⁴⁵	Q) To what extent do you agree with the statement: 'There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten by her husband' a) Strongly agree b) Agree c) Neither agree or disagree d) Disagree e) Strongly disagree
Individual behaviour^{46,47}	Perpetration of IPV in last 12 months (men) Experience of IPV in last 12 months (women)	Q) In the last 12 months, how often have you hit, slapped or beat your wife? Q) In the last 12 months, how often has your partner or husband hit, slapped or beat you?
Beliefs about typical behaviour⁴⁸	Proportion of men/women who believe most other men in their community beat their wives if they disobey them.	Q) How many of your male friends do you think sometimes hit their wives for disobeying them? (men) a) All of them b) Most of them c) About half of them d) A few of them e) None of them* <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;">* Answers A and B may be indicative of social norms</div>
Beliefs about appropriate behaviour	Proportion of men/women who believe that the practice of wife beating is acceptable within the community.	Q) If a man in this community beat his wife if she disobeyed him, do you think most of your male friends would..? a) Approve of his action b) Disapprove of his action c) Think it was none of their business* <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;">* Answer A would be indicative of social norms, and C may be indicative of social norm that IPV is a private family matter.</div>
Social sanctions/rewards for non-compliance	The proportion of men/women who agree with the statements: 'If a husband does not beat his wife if she disobeys, other men in the community will think less of him.' 'Real men control their wives'.	Q) To what extent do you agree with the statements: 'If a husband does not beat his wife if she disobeys, other men in the community will think less of him' a) Strongly agree b) Somewhat agree c) Neither agree or disagree d) Somewhat Disagree e) Strongly disagree* <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;">* Answers A and B may be indicative of social norms</div>

⁴⁵ Individuals may not be consciously aware of their attitudes. Social psychology research on 'implicit attitudes', such as the Harvard Implicit Attitude Test, uses non-verbal cues to test individual attitudes which can often reveal stereotypes and biases that individuals are not consciously aware of. See Greenwald, A. G., McGhee, D. E., & Schwartz, J. K. L. (1998).

⁴⁶ See upcoming guidance from DFID What Works to Prevent VAWG guidance on common outcome measures.

⁴⁷ Data that relies on self reported experience and perpetration of VAWG should be treated with caution, as should data that is only collected from a single sex (e.g. data on perpetration of violence reported only by men). Analysis of changes in levels of VAWG should factor in increased awareness of VAWG as an issue and social desirability bias.

⁴⁸ Social norms measures adapted from the endline survey instrument of the 2013-2016 DFID India Evaluation of the Madhya Pradesh Safe Cities Initiative, Social Development Direct and Columbia University.

4.6 Measuring shifts in social norms, attitudes and behaviour over time

Social norms are not static. They can and do change whereby new roles, responsibilities, behaviours or ideas become widely accepted or previous concepts become extinct. For example, corporal punishment in schools in the UK or the practice of foot binding in China.

Large scale macro level changes in demographics, educational level, economics or conflict situation in any community can drive shifts in behaviours and social norms, as can individual activists, change-makers and groups of like-minded people that organise to change the status quo. Norm change in other spheres (i.e. education, or increased economic empowerment) can also shift social norms and impact on levels of VAWG. However norm change may also create backlash – for example, approaches which do not sufficiently engage and gain men’s support or which challenge patriarchal structures and traditional male roles without positive alternatives provided may threaten men and increase levels of VAWG.⁴⁹ Religious ideologies, may contribute to and itself be an expression of backlash towards changing gender norms⁵⁰. However, it is important not to conflate particular harmful gender norms (which often cut across geographies and religions) with any particular faith or ethnicity to avoid alienating and stigmatising particular communities both domestically and internationally,

When monitoring changes in social norms over time, including as part of a programme evaluation, researchers need to ask the following questions:

- Has the reference group shifted?
- Over time is the harmful/beneficial norm less approved of in the group?
- Over time is the harmful/beneficial norm less typical of in the group?
- Have social sanctions reduced?
- Is there a growing number of people who deviate from the norm / demonstrate different behaviours?

Measuring social norms in this way does not replace measurement of individual attitudes and behaviour, but rather complements it. This is important for several reasons. Firstly, as you will not know the course of social change at the beginning of a programme, it is important to monitor multiple pathways. Furthermore, comparing social norms with attitudes and behaviour may reveal the extent to which norms are based on accurate or inaccurate perceptions of others, which will inform your approach. Tackling social norms that exist due to inaccurate beliefs is likely to require the true extent of behaviours and/or private disapproval to be revealed, in order to correct beliefs and make it more likely that behaviour can change in turn.

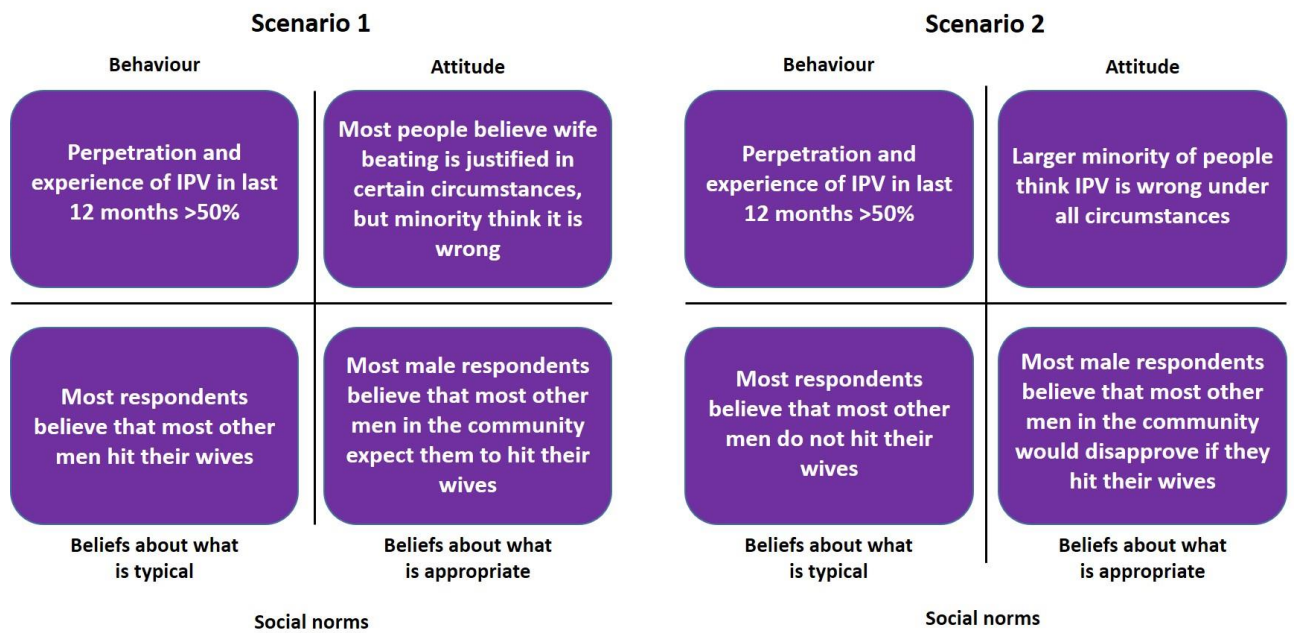
The following diagram (Diagram 2) demonstrates two different scenarios we may find from an IPV intervention baseline or endline survey. In the first scenario, the programme has succeeded in changing individual attitudes towards IPV, but not wider social norms around harmful masculinities, and consequently the behaviour persists. In the second scenario, the programme has succeeded in shifting social expectations underpinning VAWG. Although the behaviour may still persist, shifts in perceived approval or disapproval can demonstrate progress and readiness for change, which would not be captured by traditional knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) surveys.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Silberschmidt (2001)

⁵⁰ Balchin (2010)

⁵¹ Mackie and Moneti (2014)

Diagram 2: IPV intervention scenarios



5.0 Key principles for programme design

This section highlights key principles that are especially pertinent to designing and implementing a VAWG programme with components that attempt to tackle harmful social norms.

Gender-transformative – Gender transformative approaches - programmes and interventions that create opportunities for women and girls, men and boys to actively challenge gender norms are more effective than interventions simply targeting attitude and behaviour change.⁵² It is critical to address not only the specific violent behaviour but also the underlying gender inequalities and power relations that drive violence against women and girls. However, it is also worth recognising that shifts in one sphere i.e. education, political participation and other areas of life, can and have led to shifts in social and gender norms which underpin VAWG.⁵³

Right-based approach – A rights-based approach invests in beneficiaries as ‘rights-holders’, creates a legitimate channel for their voices to be heard, and enables them to play an active role in the response to tackling VAWG, as opposed to providing support or services on the basis of assumed needs and without consulting beneficiaries. This leads to more successful interventions. A rights-based approach challenges individuals and leaders to examine and assess their value system and empowers them to make meaningful and sustainable change. It also requires understanding and addressing power inequalities that constrain marginalised women and girls (and men and boys) to actively challenge discriminatory norms.⁵⁴

Inclusive – interventions should address the types of violence and discrimination experienced by marginalised women and girls including women and girls with disabilities, HIV, migrants, sex workers. For example, women and girls with disabilities experience discriminatory social norms (based on their gender and disability) that leave them vulnerable to violence and less likely to be able to speak up, be believed and access services.⁵⁵ Countering stigma, invisibility and misinformation and changing perceptions around women with disabilities (and from other marginalised groups) can be incorporated into a social norms approach. Indeed, there are likely lessons that can be learnt from how other programmes have challenged stigma and discrimination (e.g. those living with HIV).

Do no harm – there are various risks associated with social norms programming. For example, in fragile and conflict affected areas shifting social norms around reporting violence may channel individuals into poorly-resourced or dysfunctional services.⁵⁶ Or those challenging norms in the early stages of change may be at risk from stigma and discrimination from family and community members. Mechanisms to assess and address risk are important.

Context-specific diagnosis informed by formative research and local experience – It is important to develop an approach based on research and drawing on relevant local experience as much as possible so that interventions can be tailored to the relevant reference group and social context (see box 4). For example, norms need to be understood in relation to other influences on people’s agency and action in any given context such as economic resources, role models, and employment or education opportunities. Such influences can be capitalised on to promote positive change amongst a group. It is important to recognise that human beings may be ‘predictably irrational’ and are often driven by social factors, but in other instances behaviour will be driven by perfectly rational decisions and individualistic motivations.

⁵² Fulu et al (2014)

⁵³ Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (2014)

⁵⁴ Marcus and Harper (2014)

⁵⁵ Inclusive Friends (2015)

⁵⁶ Paluck and Ball (2010)

Box 6: Gender roles, Equality and Transformations (GREAT), Uganda

A five year collaboration with Save the Children, Concerned Parents Association and Pathfinder International with interventions being implemented in Northern Uganda (Lira and Amuru districts). The GREAT project uses evidence to support the formation of life stage-specific strategies which motivate youth to transform gender norms, reduce gender-based violence and promote gender-equitable sexual and reproductive health practices in post conflict communities. The target audience for this project is adolescents aged 10-14 years. Initial ethnographic research sought to understand the processes through which social norms and attitudes towards gender, reproductive health and violence are transmitted in Northern Uganda and why individuals would be motivated to change harmful norms. Use of 'Wangoo' traditional fireside learning and Acholi folklore for adolescents is encouraged to create a supportive environment for discourse on SRH, HIV and positive gender norms.

Source: Adams, 2013

Integrated and multi-sector approaches – Multicomponent, integrated interventions are more effective than single ones in preventing VAWG, ensuring that interventions are supported and reinforced from multiple sources. For example, media campaigns are more effective when combined with locally targeted outreach efforts and training workshops.⁵⁷ However, they can be more costly and challenging to scale so requiring a value for money analysis that underscores benefits for multiple development outcomes. Further, interventions designed to prevent VAWG are likely to cause a rise in women and girls seeking help or being identified as VAWG survivors, so links to response mechanisms such as social, health, security and justice services, and child protection authorities are vital.⁵⁸

Realistic programme objectives and timelines – Harmful social norms can take many years to change⁵⁹ and existing evidence suggests that greater exposure to messages leads to increased impact.⁶⁰ DFID's ToC for tackling VAWG suggests that interventions should engage over the short, medium and long-term. Careful sequencing and timing of interventions is also important given the realities of a particular context; to ensure that the needs and priorities of VAWG survivors are respected; to determine the appropriate level of ambition in terms of expected results; and to define realistic programme timeframes.⁶¹ Although some programmes have had success changing social norms among a specific social group or community within a relatively short time frame (e.g. SASA lasted 32 months), changing norms at scale takes many years, especially considering the importance of formative research to accurately diagnose the problem and design an appropriate response (and actual social change can take decades).⁶²

Balancing the need for a multi-sector and integrated approach with the need for a focused programme – Although multi-sector approaches are more effective, there is still an obvious need for a programme to be feasible and manageable with a clear scope in terms of the cohort of beneficiaries, the type of VAWG and types of social norms the programme is seeking to tackle. A tight focus on outcomes early on in the design process allows greater scope for a multi-level approach within a programme (see box 7 for an example of an education programme that tackles social norms through activities at different levels). Although elements of social norms programming can be 'national', such as advocating for legislation,

⁵⁷ Fulu et al (2014); Marcus and Page (2014b)

⁵⁸ Fulu et al (2014)

⁵⁹ For instance, it has taken around 50 years in the UK for attitudes and social norms around homosexuality to change since decriminalisation. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05zh141>.

⁶⁰ Marcus and Page (2014)

⁶¹ DFID (2012)

⁶² For example DFID DRC's La Pépinière programme is based on a planned 10-year time horizon, split over a shorter initial programme to diagnose the problem and a response (3 years) and a longer implementation phase (7 years).

much of it would likely be focused geographically around districts or regions of a country, in order to be logistically and financially feasible.

Box 7: USAID’s Doorways training programme in Ghana and Malawi (2003-2008) was designed to train teachers to help prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence by reinforcing teaching practices and attitudes that promote a safe learning environment for all students. The training aimed to increase teachers’ knowledge and shift attitudes and behaviours around VAWG and discriminatory gender norms. The classroom programme was complemented with training programmes for students and community counsellors, and additional interventions such as radio, drama, gender clubs, extra-curricular activities, and assemblies. The final evaluation using a baseline/endline survey of 400 teachers found improvements in teachers’ attitudes about gender norms and VAWG, and classroom practices. For example, in Ghana, there was a nearly 50% increase in teachers who thought girls could experience sexual harassment in school – from 30% (baseline) to nearly 50% (endline).

Source: Fancy and McAslan Fraser, 2014

Adaptive and Flexible approaches – It is difficult to predict precisely how change will happen. Will individual attitude change be sufficient? How much dialogue and debate is necessary before expectations and behaviours change? Will the change be gradual and linear or slow then sudden? An adaptive programming approach⁶³ allows testing and iteration of an intervention/s on the basis of ongoing learning (as well as building the evidence base). Rather than a single phase of Definition, Diagnosis, Design and Implementation, an intervention goes through multiple rounds of iteration and optimisation over the life-cycle of the programme, particularly at pilot stage so an optimised approach can be scaled up and evaluated.⁶⁴ However, an intervention still needs to be locally driven and based on formative research and a good contextual assessment to ensure that the most appropriate options are trialled.

Working with the most appropriate partners – Interventions should engage partners that will own, reinforce and support the intervention and ensure its impact. It is also important to recognise that the harmful social norms a programme is aiming to tackle may be adhered to by programme and partner staff, and addressing these norms should be an integral part of an intervention. Partners can include:

- **Traditional leaders and sources of influence** – Programmes should have a strategy to reach influencers at different levels and therefore traditional sources of authority such as religious leaders are important channels of influence and should be part of formative research, initial outreach strategies and sometimes programme implementation. However, traditional leaders can block as well as catalyse change. It is key to ensure they are supportive of the aims and methods of the intervention, and that any messages they agree to disseminate are monitored as part of the programme’s M&E framework.
- **Women’s rights advocates** – Women’s rights organisations (WROs) have for years attempted to change the power imbalance between men and women by challenging directly many of the norms and practices that justify male authority over women/patriarchy. They have arrived through years of trial and error at some very successful strategies for changing norms, even though their approach was not informed by an academic understanding of norm theory.⁶⁵ In addition to their experience and connections at a local level, involving local partners such as WROs increases the likelihood that progress will continue once the programme has finished.⁶⁶

⁶³ For more information and guidance on Adaptive Programming see: World Bank (2015), [Oxfamblogs](#), and [DFID Smart Rules](#)

⁶⁴ World Bank (2015)

⁶⁵ Batliwala (2012)

⁶⁶ For further rationale and guidance in working with Women’s Rights Organisations see other DFID Guidance Notes including the Theory of Change on Tackling Violence against Women and Girls and A Practical Guide on Community Programming on Violence against Women and Girls.

- **The private sector** – It may be useful to work with private sector partners such as telecommunication companies, advertising/marketing agencies, social marketing companies and the media in order to capitalise on their ability to appeal to, and reach, a range of audiences. These agencies have used techniques that tap into how human beings ‘think socially’ for decades, largely as a result of trial and error rather than applying complex theory (much like WROs). However, they are unlikely to be familiar with key concepts like social norm theory or a gender transformative approach, so will require careful management and oversight by those responsible for the overall implementation and monitoring of the programme.

Box 8: Before designing your intervention – Key questions to ask:

- Has formative research been conducted to understand if, and what, social norms underpin VAWG in a particular setting and what factors influence and undermine them?
- Does your formative research include a social inclusion analysis to capture the experiences of marginalised groups?
- Has a stakeholder mapping been conducted in terms of who holds influence in maintaining as well as shifting social norms, who is impacted by norms and who responds to minimise risks as a result of social norms and social norms change?
- Have links been sought with women’s rights groups and other important local / national initiatives that could either undermine or improve the reach and relevance of your programme?
- Has a risk assessment been conducted to understand the possible consequences for women and girls (and men and boys) of efforts to shift norms as well as an actual shift in norms and mechanisms put in place to minimise risk?
- Are there existing mechanisms in place to respond to possible increases in reporting of violence (as a result of the programme)?
- Has the design team thought about how to transform gender norms that underpin VAWG, and how it might inadvertently reinforce norms that could exacerbate male dominance of women?

6.0 A framework for programme design

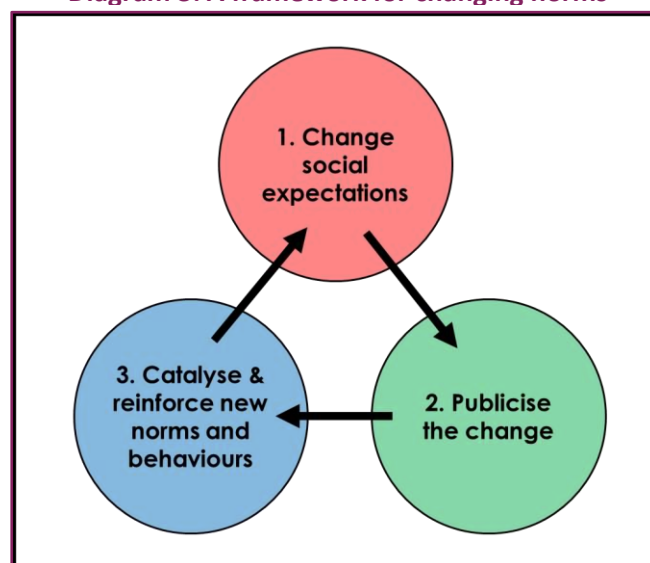
There is increasing evidence from VAWG programmes of what approaches may work to shift harmful social norms in different contexts.⁶⁷ Much of this evidence is from programmes tackling FGM/C and CEFM, but there is also increasing evidence from programmes tackling IPV and non-partner sexual violence and important and relevant lessons from the behavioural sciences. (Case studies of promising programmes are presented in Section 7).

Human behaviour is greatly influenced by what our attention is drawn to.⁶⁸ So in tackling a harmful behaviour, our first instinct is often to draw attention to it i.e. to make it salient and highly visible. Doing so however, can reinforce the idea that the behaviour in question is ‘normal’, typical and appropriate (even more so than may actually be the case⁶⁹). Many of the recommendations to tackle harmful social norms and replace them with alternative norms and behaviours stem from this insight.

The following three-stage framework draws on both theory and evidence of successful approaches to shifting harmful social norms.⁷⁰ These insights can be used as a checklist by advisors to integrate a social norms approach in programme design and to monitor and evaluate programme implementation through a social norms lens (a checklist is provided in Annex B).

- 1) In addition to shifting individual attitudes, programmes must **change social expectations** regarding the behaviour within the reference group;
- 2) These changes in attitudes, expectations and behaviour need to be **publicised**;
- 3) Finally **new norms and behaviours need to be catalysed and reinforced** through rewards, sanctions and opportunities to conform.

Diagram 3: A framework for changing norms



1. Change social expectations

a. If inaccurate beliefs are present then raise awareness to dispel misconceptions

Tackling social norms that exist due to inaccurate beliefs is likely to require the true extent of behaviours and/or private disapproval to be revealed, in order to correct beliefs and make it more likely that behaviour can change in turn. For example, where pluralistic ignorance is in play - when a majority of a group privately reject a behaviour, but adhere because they incorrectly assume everybody else accepts it - then raising awareness of the true extent of private support amongst the reference group can be effective.

⁶⁷ In particular, there is increasing evidence emerging from the experience of programmes tackling FGM/C and child marriage. Case studies of promising programmes are presented in section 7.

⁶⁸ Dolan et al (2010); World Bank (2015)

⁶⁹ Tversky and Kahneman's (1973) work on Availability Heuristics highlights the ease with which we can develop inaccurate beliefs about what is typical and appropriate. Also see World Bank (2015).

⁷⁰ Adapted from the DFID funded Voices for Change Programme in Nigeria 'checklist of tactics' which have been found to be effective in shifting harmful social norms in different contexts. Desai (2015 - unpublished).

b. Shift individual attitudes towards harmful behaviour (i.e. weaken existing norm)

When support for an existing behaviour is strong, individual attitudes need to change before social expectations can change (attitudinal change is insufficient on its own to shift social norms).

Attitudes towards a behaviour can be tackled in a number of ways, including through:

- Addressing incorrect factual beliefs (e.g. sex with a young girl can cure HIV)
- Providing examples of the harm it causes (e.g. the link between IPV and health consequences for women and girls, or on early marriage/pregnancy on the health of the mother and child)
- Raising awareness of contradictions with other norms (e.g. religious teachings regarding mutual respect and love between couples)
- Reframing an issue so participants see it in a new way (e.g. framing gender inequality in terms of how power is distributed)
- Highlighting the 'dispersal' of the norm within the reference group (e.g. 'most Wolof men are against wife beating under any circumstances')
- Highlighting the direction of change within the reference group (e.g. 'more and more Pashtun men are challenging violence against women – are you?')

c. Promote public debate and deliberation around the norm

A programme may be successful at changing individual attitudes in private (e.g. through individual counselling, leaflets, text messages), but may not shift social expectations (i.e. an individual may be unaware that others' attitudes have also changed). Therefore public debate and deliberation is important to shift social expectations so individuals can see and hear from others in the reference group who may be changing their attitudes towards VAWG.

Emergent evidence suggests that giving communities the chance to discuss and reflect on messages is crucial in changing gender norms.⁷¹ This helps to confirm to reluctant audiences that others have changed their attitudes, to allay fears of possible sanctions for noncompliance, and to provide opportunities for groups or communities to change together.

Interpersonal activities such as community workshops and group discussions are a common way of providing opportunities for debate and deliberation, but edutainment and mass media can also be used, for example through radio call-in shows, as a way of doing this at scale. Social media and mobile technologies are other obvious ways to reach large numbers of people and prompt debate, but there is a dearth of studies examining the impact on social norms.

d. Promote a positive alternative

Norms exist for a reason: they provide rules for how to belong to a group. Harmful social norms that are not replaced with more positive norms are likely to return.⁷² Programmes therefore need to provide alternatives to harmful norms to make change as easy as possible e.g. non-violent conflict resolution, consensual sex, community intervention in wife-beating (rather than silence). In fact it may be easier to start a new norm than tackle an existing one.⁷³

The benefits of the new behaviour should be clearly demonstrated so that people feel they will gain something from shifting to the new norm (e.g. children in families with no IPV lead happier and healthier lives; couples with increased respect and equal decision making lead happier lives). In addition, the new behaviour should be highly visible so that it is more salient than the old behaviour, and therefore more likely to influence behaviour (e.g. messaging across multiple media and repeated over time).

⁷¹ Marcus and Page (2014b)

⁷² Paluck and Ball (2010)

⁷³ Heise (2015)

e. Provide opportunities for public and collective change

Public pledges are important because they help to create trust amongst participants and onlookers in those who are creating change. They directly address individual beliefs about what is typical and appropriate behaviour within a group, i.e. if I see many others in my community sign a pledge against VAWG I may be less likely to think most others in the community perpetrate IPV and also less likely to believe it is socially acceptable. Coordinated pledges, such as FGM/C abandonment ceremonies, have also shown to be effective, as it allows groups to collectively decide and simultaneously pledge together.

This works best when there is already private support for action to prevent VAWG and where sanctions to do so are not too high. Therefore, pledges and public commitments should follow, rather than precede, activities to change individual attitudes, promote public debate and alternative norms.

2. Publicise the change

a. Publicise role models and benefits of new behaviour

Many of the more successful social norms approaches recognise and promote the power of role models in the change process. **Role models may persuade people to adopt new norms, condemn existing norms and/or simply make an alternative seem feasible where previously it was unimaginable.** They may be community leaders, religious figures or celebrities such as music or sports stars, but they may also be other boys, girls or adults who challenge particular norms, or who have done so in the past and can be seen as living proof that new norms can lead to positive outcomes.⁷⁴

Social norms marketing and edutainment have used the mass media to promote role models in radio and TV dramas that the audience can identify with, but communication materials at the local level can also be an important component of such initiatives and often include a wide range of creative materials, such as posters, comics and information sheets.

b. Avoid reinforcing the negative behaviour

Many interventions to tackle VAWG focus on ‘awareness raising’ communications, which can sometimes do more harm than good by making a harmful behaviours more salient and reinforcing a negative norm (e.g. billboards with the message ‘Rape is a problem in Kinshasa’ can perpetuate the notion that it is normal).⁷⁵

Further, in line with a gender transformative approach, messages should be screened to ensure they are not reinforcing other harmful norms and stereotypes. Messages which emphasise the need to protect women from violence can play into ideas about women as the ‘weaker sex’ and inadvertently shore up support for violence against women and girls who do not play the ‘weaker’ role.

c. Develop a diffusion strategy to catalyse broader societal change.

Most programmes do not have the resources to work intensively with the whole population to shift social norms. Therefore, in order for programmes to have impact beyond direct beneficiaries, the theory of change should specifically address not only how individuals and groups go through a process of social norm and behaviour change, but also how this change can be scaled up beyond the direct beneficiaries

Box 9: Promoting female village councillors in West Bengal

Research has shown that the introduction of a quota for female village councillors in West Bengal tackled gender bias and perceptions about the (in)effectiveness of female leaders by exposing men to female leaders and in turn proving that women could be competent and effective leaders. Over the course of two election cycles, the gender bias for electing female leaders was eliminated and stereotypical attitudes towards women regarding leadership abilities were reduced.

Source: Beaman et al. (2009)

⁷⁴ Marcus and Harper (2014)

⁷⁵ Heise (2011); Paluck and Ball (2010)

and participants to the wider society. Several programmes have shown promising practices pairing communication strategies such as mass media with the cultivation of local change agents such as citizens, key influencers and role models.⁷⁶ (See section 7 on case studies).

According to social network theory, individual change-agents should be better connected and more influential in their communities to increase the chances of successful diffusion at scale.⁷⁷

Box 10: Oxfam’s ‘We Can’ Campaign in South Asia urges individuals to reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs and to reject all forms of violence against women before encouraging participants to become ‘Change Makers’. This entails signing a public pledge to make small changes in their behaviours toward violence and gender equity and to carry the campaign message to 10 others.

Source: Heise (2011); Williams and Aldred (2011)

3. Catalyse and reinforce new positive behaviours and norms

a. Provide opportunities for new behaviour

A social norms intervention is more likely to be successful if it not only provides clear guidance on a new norm but also opportunities and ways of behaving in accordance with that new norm.⁷⁸

New behaviours need to be practiced to become normal. ‘Channel factors’ are a feature, context or service that make it easy for individuals to act out a new norm. For instance, series 4 of the radio-drama Soul City focused on GBV and also promoted a hotline that referred callers directly to service providers, in order to encourage help-seeking behaviour (see section 7.3 for full case study). However, programme managers and implementers should ensure services are viable offerings and be careful not to channel individuals into poorly-resourced or dysfunctional services.⁷⁹

b. Create new rewards and sanctions

Norm change is not necessarily linear, and in order for new norms to be sustained, sufficient sanctions and rewards systems must be in place. For instance, rewards could take the form of esteem and sense of belonging to a group of early adopters endorsed by aspirational role models and ambassadors. Whereas the introduction of new laws might not necessarily create immediate new sanctions, they can send an important signal, and give individuals who disagree with a social norm an excuse for not adhering.⁸⁰ Legal and policy change is more likely to be effective if in line with social norms and where sanctions are effectively implemented. However, shifts in legal systems alone are unlikely to shift social norms (see section 7.4).⁸¹ Conversely shifts in social norms without shifts in legal systems/sanctions may be a barrier to changing norms at scale.

Box 11: DFID Nigeria’s Voices 4 Change (V4C) programme incorporates activities aimed at policy and legal reform alongside wider social norm change. Their main legal work concerns two Bills: The Violence Against the Person Prohibition Bill (which was passed in 2015 by the Federal Government) and outlaws most forms of traditional harmful practice, including FGM and wife beating. V4C supported the Gender Technical Unit in the Federal government to get the Bill supported. Now that the Bill is passed V4C is focusing on publicising it and getting it passed at the State level. The second bill focuses on Gender and Equal Opportunities.

Source: conversation with V4C team (2015)

⁷⁶ Heise (2011)

⁷⁷ Christakis and Fowler (2011)

⁷⁸ Paluck and Ball (2010)

⁷⁹ Paluck and Ball (2010)

⁸⁰ Mackie (2015)

⁸¹ Bicchieri and Mercier (2014); Shell-Duncan et al (2010)

7.0 Case studies and examples of promising practice

This section provides an overview of different approaches including case studies that aim to shift social norms to prevent or respond to VAWG. For each case study the focus is on the specific social norms being addressed, the mix of stakeholders, and timing and sequencing of interventions. These case studies provide insights for programmers on mechanisms for change and programme design and/or how their implementation reflects social norms theory. **However, most programmes were not explicitly designed with social norms theory in mind, and have not measured changes in social norms as distinct from changes in individual attitudes and behaviours.** Further, interventions tend to be small scale, have not compared and measured value for money and we know very little about whether they brought about sustained change over time. This reflects the nascent state of the evidence base and examples are included here because they have the potential to change norms and as such offer important lessons for further work on social norms.

It is important to note that **most interventions with evidence of success operate at multiple levels and employ multiple strategies** (i.e. small group work and training, community mobilisation, social marketing and edutainment, legal change), so the categorisation of interventions in this section is necessarily simplistic, and reflects the ‘centre of gravity’ of each intervention, or where it is most unique.

7.1 Small group workshops and trainings

Small group workshops and trainings aimed at changing norms and behaviour around violence against women and girls (VAWG) within a particular group are one intervention approach. The mode of delivery, the populations targeted and the length of engagement vary greatly among different group-based interventions.⁸² Such interventions target specific groups, for example, working with parents to encourage non-violent discipline of children, supporting women and girls to develop and demonstrate alternative lifestyle options for women and girls,⁸³ working with young men to develop healthier relationships and with members of institutions such as the police, company employees, teachers and religious leaders to transform their attitudes and sense of responsibility regarding VAWG. Small group work can also form the basis of working with the wider community using those trained in such groups to diffuse messages (see section 7.2).

Key implementation challenges have included how to recruit and sustain the engagement of participants over time, especially among men and boys; and how to scale up to a significant number of community members in order to transform overriding gender norms. Programmes that build on existing platforms where men and/or women boys and girls meet—such as microfinance meetings or sports clubs⁸⁴—generally maintain better rates of participation.⁸⁵ Such programmes can be used to incentivise participation in components that more specifically focus on changing norms, behaviours and attitudes and can in fact lead to improved outcomes in other areas such as greater economic development for women.⁸⁶ Approaches have also been mainstreamed in to school and institutional training curricula for wider reach.

⁸² Heise (2011)

⁸³ Desai, (2015- unpublished)

⁸⁴ For example, the DFID supported STOP Gender-Based Violence programme in Zambia which includes a component using football to engage men and boys aged 12-23 and the South African IMAGE micro-finance programme for young women.

⁸⁵ Kim et al (2009); Pronyk et al (2006)

⁸⁶ Taylor (2015)

Evidence of effectiveness:

- There is substantial evidence of the effectiveness of small group education interventions that adopt a gender transformative approach to improve men and boys' (and sometimes women and girls') gender-related attitudes. Interventions combining group education with boys and men and intense community mobilisation, are most promising as they have the potential to sustain long-term transformation in gender norms by developing a group of people with the skills and confidence to engage in influencing wider community change.⁸⁷
- Small group development initiatives for women and girls, such as micro-finance, do not necessarily lead to their empowerment or a reduction in VAWG (in fact sometimes isolated women's empowerment interventions that do not engage men can lead to increased VAWG). The evidence suggests that specific sessions focused on the gender norms that underpin VAWG and work with men in the community are also needed.⁸⁸ For instance, evidence from the 'Image' programme⁸⁹ in South Africa shows positive results from a microfinance intervention that was combined with a participatory training on gender, violence and HIV.
- When working with formal institutions (such as the security and justice sector) having the support of senior members, and supportive policies and procedures, is vital for sustaining and dispersing impact.⁹⁰
- Existing reviews and impact evaluation findings point to several issues that limit the strength of the evidence. In most evaluations, changes in attitudes and behaviours are self-reported soon after the end of the intervention. This self-reporting could be affected by social-desirability bias⁹¹ and there is limited evidence on how long these changes are sustained.

Intervention: Program H, Brazil (2002-present)⁹²

Program H is primarily a community intervention focusing on peer-to-peer education sessions facilitated by young men who are guided by Program H manuals. In some settings, these community interventions include a social norms marketing campaign to promote gender equality and reduce GBV. The programme has been implemented in six cities in Latin America and the Caribbean and two cities in India. Program H is evaluated primarily with a self-report scale called the GEM scale, which focuses more on personal attitudes than on perceptions of typical and desired behaviours in the community. However, their approach is in line with social norms theory as it aims to weaken negative norms and promote new descriptive norms by working with community members to assess their own attitudes and training them to diffuse messages throughout the community.

Type of norms being challenged: Rigid notions of masculinity, gender roles and responsibilities; acceptability of GBV and violence against children.

Promising practice: 1. Peer to peer education sessions encouraging gender equitable behaviour. 2. Developing positive role models who are early adopters of positive behaviours to encourage change in others. 3. Safe spaces where men could try out new ways of being men under the guidance of positive male leaders. 4. Materials included in government-mandated sexuality education in Brazil. 5. Materials for the social norms marketing intervention developed by the men who participated in the peer-to-peer workshops to increase relevance and impact.

⁸⁷ Fulu et al (2014); Heise (2011)

⁸⁸ Taylor (2015)

⁸⁹ Kim et al, 2009

⁹⁰ Khalique et al (2011); Taylor (2015)

⁹¹ Fulu et al (2014)

⁹² Case study from Paluck and Ball (2010) except where indicated.

Results:

- A small quasi-experimental study was conducted by implementing different versions of the intervention in three low-income communities in Brazil. Maré, only received the education programme, Bangu, received the education programme combined with the lifestyles social marketing campaign. Morro dos Macacos, did not receive any intervention until later.
- At the intervention sites a significantly larger proportion of respondents support gender equitable ideas at six months and one year post intervention, compared to control group.
- The change was often greater for young men exposed to the combination of group education activities and the community-based lifestyle social marketing campaign highlighting the importance of combining both interpersonal communication and reinforcing gender equity messages on the community level.⁹³
- For information on programme costs see annex A on Value for Money.

Intervention: The Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS), India (2008-present)

The 'Gender Equity Movement in Schools' (GEMS) is a school-based approach to foster more gender-equitable norms among adolescent female and male students (age 12-14). Group activities include role-playing games, interactive extracurricular activities, and critical reflection-centred lessons which explore topics like girls attaining higher education, reducing GBV, delaying marriage, and more equitable sharing of household tasks with men and boys. Although this intervention did not focus on social norms specifically it offers lessons regarding effectiveness of different and combined approaches. Following the success of the pilot phase in Mumbai, the Maharashtra state government has integrated key elements of GEMS in the school gender programme for all of its nearly 25,000 public schools.

Type of norms being challenged: Acceptance of male domination of women, a rigid gender division of labour, abilities and privileges, tolerance and acceptance of VAWG, including victim blaming.

Promising practice: 1. Participatory methodologies to engage students in meaningful and relevant interactions and reflection about key issues. 2. Sessions conducted by trained facilitators and held during the regular school day. 3. A GEMS school campaign involving a week-long series of events designed in consultation with the students involving competitions, debates and short plays.

Results:

- A quasi-experimental evaluation of a GEMS pilot in Mumbai after two years of implementation among 8,000 students showed that participating students were more likely to support higher education for girls, openly express opposition to GBV and champion delaying marriage.⁹⁴ The proportion of both boys and girls in the high gender equality category⁹⁵ more than doubled in both intervention arms (campaign only, group sessions and campaign) from baseline.
- Boys and girls in the schools that experienced group sessions and the campaign reported greater changes in their own behaviour than those in the campaign only schools.
- After the second round of the intervention, more students in both intervention groups reported they would take action in response to sexual harassment.

⁹³ Horizons (2004)

⁹⁴ Achyut et al (2011)

⁹⁵ Based on scores on a 21-item scale.

7.2 Community dialogue, reflection and mobilisation

Multi-component programmes including community-level messaging, collective dialogue and reflection focused on challenging acceptability of violence against women and girls and male right to control female behaviour have been one of the most effective ways to change discriminatory social norms.⁹⁶ Opportunities for reflection show reluctant individuals that others have changed their attitudes, raise and allay fears of not engaging in the damaging norm, help people to understand the negative impact of gender inequitable norms and also enable communities to change together. Community-level interventions tend to have components dedicated to mobilising specific people – sometimes known as change agents (generally men and women already displaying more gender equitable attitudes and behaviours) within a community to encourage others to change by diffusing messages and opportunities for dialogue and reflection to people beyond direct participants. However, such approaches can be more challenging in urban areas where it is harder to define the ‘community’.

Evidence of effectiveness:

- There is promising evidence that community-wide mobilisation approaches are effective and monitoring data suggest such approaches can have a wide reach.⁹⁷ However, M&E tends to measure attitude and self-reported behaviour change rather than social norm change.
- Such approaches can undermine social acceptance of physical violence in relationships among both women and men and also increase acceptance among women and men that there are circumstances when a woman can refuse sex with her partner.
- Evidence suggests that strategies key to success are 1. Encouraging community change agents in their own process of change and then supporting them to ‘walk others in the community through a process of change’ including engaging members in a process of critical reflection, 2. Effective training of community mobilisers⁹⁸, 3. Using engaging communications materials that highlight individuals’ capacity to act.
- Supporting men and religious leaders (who already display gender equitable attitudes) to convey messages is effective at transforming attitudes among reference group members. However, evidence shows that care has to be taken to reach women with messages (and support them to disseminate messages among their peers).⁹⁹

Intervention: the SASA! approach, Uganda (2008-present)

SASA! aims to prevent VAW and HIV in Uganda¹⁰⁰ through mobilising communities to reassess the acceptability of violence and gender inequality. It supports trained community activists to engage with family, friends, neighbours and key stakeholders, including local and religious leaders, the police and health workers. Over the (evaluated) intervention period, activists led over 11,000 activities, including community conversations, door-to-door discussions, quick chats, trainings, public events, poster discussions, community meetings, film shows and soap opera groups in order to engage a variety of community members.

Type of norms being challenged: Social acceptance of physical violence in relationships among both women and men; and women cannot refuse sex from her partner. SASA! promotes injunctive norms such as ‘non-violent relationships are happier and healthier’ rather than descriptive norms such as ‘men use

⁹⁶ Marcus and Page (2014)

⁹⁷ Marcus and Page (2014b); Fulu et al (2014)

⁹⁸ Cascade training does not work well with programmes aimed at transforming deeply held beliefs and gender-related norms. Fulu et al (2014) recommend that community mobilisers are trained by field officers employed by the project.

⁹⁹ Schensul et al (2015)

¹⁰⁰ SASA! is currently being used in more than 15 countries in various contexts and settings such as: refugee camps and settlements, pastoralist communities, high-density urban communities, catholic and Muslim faith-based institutions and rural communities.

violence against women'.¹⁰¹

Promising practice: 1. Using the language of power rather than gender and women's rights to make messages more relevant to community members.¹⁰² 2. Influencing public priorities by engaging local leaders, policymakers and journalists to make VAW and its connection to HIV a popular media topic and a catalyst for new policies and practices. 3. Use of a wide range of creative, accessible and generally appealing materials. 4. In-depth training modules for use in workshops or short training sessions to support individuals to explore their potential as activists.

Results:

- SASA! activities reached over 260,000 community members in the six parishes in the Makindye and Rubaga divisions in Kampala District, where SASA! was implemented.
- An RCT found that SASA! reduced the reported social acceptability (of men and women) of physical violence in relationships and also increased the social acceptance of women's refusal of sex with her partner.
- The levels of physical partner violence occurring in the past year reported by women were 52% lower in the SASA! intervention communities compared to the control four years post intervention implementation.
- Women in intervention communities who had experienced violence were over twice as likely as women in control communities to report that they experienced a supportive community response, although this was not statistically significant due to small numbers in each cluster.¹⁰³
- For information on value for money see annex A.



Intervention: Communities Care (CC): Transforming Lives and Preventing Violence Programme, Somalia and South Sudan¹⁰⁴ (2014-present)

The goal of the CC Programme is to create safer communities for women and girls through transforming harmful social norms that contribute to sexual violence (specifically in emergency contexts) into social norms that uphold women and girls' equality, safety and dignity. The programme uses two mutually reinforcing strategies: the first is to strengthen care and support for survivors of sexual violence; the second is to engage the community in collective action to prevent sexual violence. Each community identifies the collective actions that are relevant and achievable to their particular context at the family and community levels, including across different sectors.

¹⁰¹ Michau (2012)

¹⁰² Watts et al (2014)

¹⁰³ Watts et al (2014)

¹⁰⁴ UNICEF (2014)

Pathway to change

The CC pathway comprises six steps that are the building blocks of the programme. These steps are based on careful analysis and research about what has worked in shifting harmful social norms and practices in other contexts.

- Step 1 -Strengthen community-based care and support for survivors of sexual violence.
- Step 2 - Enable reflection among core groups in the community about human rights and sexual violence.
- Step 3 - Explore shared beliefs and practices.
- Step 4 - Support collective public commitment to taking action and making changes.
- Step 5 - Communicate change.
- Step 6 - Build an environment that supports change.



Type of norms being challenged: reshaping norms that promote sexual violence into norms that promote dignity, equality and non-violence.

Positive practice: 1. Careful analysis and research about what has worked. 2. Participatory and whole-of-community approach to social change (including work with actors in health care, psychosocial, education, security and justice and community members and leaders). 3. Transformative human rights approach that localises human rights principles and affirms positive shared values.

Results:

Midline data has been collected in both countries and results are due shortly. Early analysis suggests significant improvement for the intervention group in several areas.

7.3 Media, Edutainment and Marketing

‘Social norms marketing’ is the adoption and integration of private sector marketing tools, techniques and channels specifically to change social norms and the behaviours driven by them. The use of mass media and marketing approaches is an efficient way of reaching large numbers of people at relatively low cost, but is also particularly well-suited to: modelling and promoting new pro-social (i.e. non-violent) norms in ways that make them more ‘salient’ and highly visible; promoting the benefits of new norms; changing attitudes towards harmful behaviours and norms at scale; and promoting stories of change.¹⁰⁵ Media formats such as talk-shows or call-in shows may also provide opportunities for individuals to hear of others changing their attitudes.

The most successful interventions work with experienced organizations to develop and deliver sophisticated television/radio programming and communications combined with community mobilisation strategies aimed at changing gender-related norms and behaviours.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Marcus & Page (2014); Marcus & Harper (2014); Mackie (1996); Cooper & Fletcher (2013); Paluck & Ball (2010)

¹⁰⁶ Heise (2011)

Evidence of effectiveness:

- There is some evidence from a small number of well-designed interventions that multi-media communications can change attitudes and norms relating to violence and gender inequality among a large target population.¹⁰⁷ There is limited evidence that marketing/media approaches can reduce violence alone, and interventions that have reduced violence directly were combined with interpersonal/community-level components as part of an integrated, multi-level programme.¹⁰⁸
- Like much evidence in this sector, evaluations tend to focus on changes in attitudes and self-reported behaviours.

Intervention: Soul City, South Africa (1994-present)

Soul City uses edutainment – television and radio drama, and mass distribution of booklets – to address empowerment of women and girls, inequitable masculinities, VAW, women’s self-efficacy, and all aspects of HIV. Soul City seeks to change the broader social and community environment, for example to increase access to services, support giving behaviour increase debate, increase collective efficacy, and facilitate community action and community social norm change. Series 4 of the TV drama (further reported on and debated in radio and in print) specifically focused on IPV featuring a story line about Matlakala, who is the wife of an abusive husband, Thabang.¹⁰⁹

Type of norms being challenged: Tolerance of VAW; IPV is a private matter; rigid ideas of masculinity. The Soul City provides examples of specific behaviours to prevent VAWG (as opposed to simply “fight GBV!”).¹¹⁰

Promising practices: 1. Encouraging a process of norm change and modelling specific new behaviours through the soap opera. 2. Using multiple strategies of communication and reinforcement at community level.¹¹¹ 3. Modelling new norm of safe community response to domestic violence by banging pots and pans in protest of a neighbour beating his wife. 4. A partnership with the National Network on Violence against Women, a coalition of over 1500 activists and community organisations from rural and urban areas to stimulate community dialogue on VAWG, advocate for legal change and also provide support for survivors.

Results¹¹²:

- Eight months after being established, 41% of respondents nationally had heard of the helpline.
- The evaluation found a consistent association between exposure to Soul City and both support-seeking (e.g. calling the helpline) and support-giving (e.g. people who reported that they did something concrete to stop domestic violence during the evaluation period). Anecdotal reports indicated that at least some communities adopted the pot-banging strategy modelled in the series.

Box 12: Soul City evaluation results

The evaluation survey included questions about social norms regarding domestic violence, for example:

- “Do people in your community think it is culturally acceptable for a man to beat his wife?”
- “Do your friends believe that women who wear short skirts are asking for men to touch them or make sexual remarks?”
- “Does most of your community believe that violence between a man and his wife is a private matter?”

(Source Paluck and Ball, 2010)

¹⁰⁷ Paluck and Ball (2010); Heise (2011)

¹⁰⁸ Fulu et al (2014); Marcus and Page (2014b)

¹⁰⁹ Ndong (2013)

¹¹⁰ Paluck and Ball (2010)

¹¹¹ Paluck and Ball (2010)

¹¹² Heise (2011); Paluck and Ball (2010)

- A post exposure survey¹¹³ demonstrated that people who listened to Series 4 were more likely to perceive that abused women should not tolerate abuse (individual attitude) and the social norms that their community agrees that VAWG is a serious problem and that domestic violence should not be a private matter (i.e. beliefs about what is thought to be inappropriate in the community).
- Exposure to the series appeared not to influence shared beliefs regarding the appropriateness of sexual harassment or the norm that violence is culturally acceptable in the respondent's community.
- For information on value for money: see annex A.

Intervention: Bell Bajao, India (2008 - present)

Bell Bajao!, launched in India in 2008 by Breakthrough (an Indian women's rights organisation), was a campaign that highlighted the role that men and boys can play in taking a stand against and reducing domestic violence ('Bring domestic violence to a halt. Ring the Bell'). Bell Bajao's series of public service announcements (PSAs) for radio, print and television show men and boys ringing the doorbells of other community members to interrupt domestic violence they overheard.

Breakthrough also trains young people to educate communities on women's rights, sexuality and HIV. In 2010, Breakthrough's staff and advocates travelled in video vans 14,000 miles through cities and villages screening the PSAs and involving communities through games, street theatre and other cultural tools with the aim of creating a sustainable, on-ground process of transformation.

Type of norms being challenged: Domestic violence is a private family matter; women should tolerate violence in silence; bystanders should not intervene.¹¹⁴

Promising practices: 1. Simple, direct campaign message (based on formative research) 'Bring domestic violence to a halt. Ring the Bell' with men and boys the key target audience; highlighting their positive role in the solution. 2. Modelling a very specific new norm and a safe way to intervene when hearing DV. 3. Integration of campaign into ongoing broader outreach (using new and more traditional media) and the community mobilisation work of Breakthrough.

Results:

- A pre and post campaign evaluation (but without control communities) found that on most measures, individuals from the communities that received both components of the campaign (media and community mobilisation) registered significantly more change in knowledge, attitudes and practices than those living in communities that were only exposed to the media component.¹¹⁵ Overall the campaign reached 130 million people. This again suggests exposure to messages through multiple channels increases the likelihood of change.¹¹⁶
- There was a notable decline in the proportion of individuals who felt that an abused wife should remain silent, that a wife taking legal action brings shame to the family and that domestic violence is nobody's business.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ However, most of the baseline and post-exposure surveys are not comparable since they use different samples.

¹¹⁴ [End Violence Now \(undated\)](#)

¹¹⁵ End Violence Now (undated)

¹¹⁶ Marcus and Page (2014b)

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*

7.4 Legal Change

Laws against VAWG are an important policy commitment and create an enabling environment for change when preceded and complemented by community mobilisation, the sensitization of citizens, particularly national and local leaders, as well as adequate implementation including the strengthening of government systems and accountability to citizens.¹¹⁸ Legal and policy approaches generally promote a criminal justice response and focus on punishing perpetrators and protecting survivors rather than prevention of VAWG. The assumption is that rates of violence will go down due to perceptions that the costs (incarceration) of the behaviour go up rather than because social norms changed.

It is probable that legal change is most effective when there is already a sea change in public opinion regarding recognition of the need for a law on VAWG or IPV.¹¹⁹ It has been argued that whether laws bring about social change hinges on factors such as legitimacy, procedural fairness, and how the law is originated and enforced.¹²⁰ People who view the law as legitimate are more likely to comply with it even when this contradicts their interests. However, if the law strays too far from popular social norms, the public will not respect the law, and hence it will not stigmatise those who violate it.¹²¹

Evidence of effectiveness:

- There is very little evidence available that legal change only deters citizens from committing VAWG, let alone changes social norms regarding VAWG. In fact there is mounting evidence that violations of women's human rights remain unrelenting even in countries where legislative changes and political campaigns have been introduced to address VAWG.¹²² This is likely due to inadequate framing of the law and implementation.
- The impact of laws championing strategies to prevent VAWG through community mobilisation and mass education is even less known.
- However, there is some evidence that where laws promoting gender equality are implemented there is change. For example, Driemeier and Gajigo (2013) found in Ethiopia that, in regions that had implemented family law reform, that no longer required women to have their husband's permission to work outside the home and that had raised the age of marriage, women's participation in occupations requiring work outside the home, full-time hours and higher skills had risen more than in other regions.
- Feminist activism plays a more important role in policy change than political parties, numbers of women legislators, or even national wealth. Policies are also more comprehensive including specified mechanisms for improving implementation such as funding, training and capacity building for national officials.¹²³ It is also likely that campaigning and mobilisation impacts social norms around the issue.¹²⁴

Intervention: The impact of domestic violence law in Cambodia

The domestic violence law in Cambodia aimed to 'prevent domestic violence, protect the victims and strengthen the culture of non-violence and the harmony within the households in society in the Kingdom of Cambodia'.¹²⁵ However, DFID-funded research on the impact of domestic violence law in Cambodia found legislation can entrench gender norms and traditions when it fails to challenge them.¹²⁶

¹¹⁸ Heise, 2011

¹¹⁹ Bicchieri and Mercier (2014)

¹²⁰ Bicchieri and Mercier (2014)

¹²¹ Stuntz (2000), quoted in Bicchieri and Mercier (2014)

¹²² Frías (2013); Usdin, Christofides, Malepe, & Maker (2000)

¹²³ Htun and Weldon (2013)

¹²⁴ Marcus and Harper (2014)

¹²⁵ Royal Government of Cambodia (2005)

¹²⁶ Brickell, et al (2014)

Type of norms being challenged: Acceptance of domestic violence.

Promising practice: Mass media effectively raised public awareness of the new law.

Results:

- The efficacy of the domestic violence law to assist victims in Cambodia was hindered by prevailing gender norms (around harmony in the family and collective security), as well as structural inadequacies which lead to a reliance on customary mechanisms and norms.¹²⁷ Injured victims are still pressured into reconciliation with the same husband, often repeatedly.¹²⁸
- A decade since its ratification, public opinion remains that women should stay silent about domestic violence in order to keep the family together. The study's quantitative survey in two provinces showed that 55% of men and 75% of women believe this (n = 1,177).
- Women's financial dependence on spouses is a primary reason for the law's non- or retracted use, while the strong onus on local reconciliation arises from the framing of domestic violence law as an impossibility, even danger for women, in a weak rule of law environment where corruption is rife.
- On a positive note, the quantitative survey showed the success in raising public awareness of the law (though not necessarily the rights it accords). 92% participants (n=1,177) knew that a specific domestic violence law existed. The mass media was the primary source of knowledge for 95% of participants.

¹²⁷ Brickell (2015b)

¹²⁸ Brickell (2015a)

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Annex A: Value for money approaches to VAWG interventions

Calculating VfM (Value for Money) is much more than measuring 'how much a VAWG intervention costs'; it is about whether the development assistance provided is getting a good return in terms of impact on women and girls' lives. **DFID's Approach to Value for Money**¹²⁹ describes the principles of VfM and provides examples of how these principles can be applied to DFID-funded programmes.

A focus on delivering value for money is often confused with a focus simply on **cost**. Delivering value for money is not simply a focus on costs and a race to the bottom, it is about asking questions on how the best use can be made of **all resources** for example: knowledge and best practices, staff time, use of partners experience and better coordination; assessing a programme against set or well accepted standards; assessing additional benefits and checking whether equity has been promoted as well as identifying cost drivers.

DFID emphasises **four main** principles to consider in its approach to VfM: **economy, efficiency, and effectiveness and equity**,¹³⁰ and *"whether the investment (development assistance) is getting a good return in terms of impact on women's and girls' lives"*¹³¹. DFID explicitly recognises that programmes will be more expensive to deliver in fragile and violent contexts, but these additional costs should not be a barrier – a clear indication that cost alone is not the only factor to consider when considering VfM. Consideration of VfM should come at all stage of the programme cycle beginning with the case for intervention as set out in the business case, project design phase, through to monitoring and evaluation.

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Considering VFM at the Intervention stage

Deciding whether or not to invest in an intervention requires an assessment of whether the expected *results* of the intervention justify the resources required. Firstly, this includes the need for an evidence-based analysis of the need for any given rationale, and an analysis of broad policy options that are appropriate for responding to specific needs. In order to make this assessment, it is important to understand the Results Chain and how inputs, generate activities (or 'processes') and produce outputs, and finally result in outcomes and impact (see Diagram 4 and Table 4).

¹²⁹ DFID, 2011b

¹³⁰ Ibid

¹³¹ DFID, 2013b

Diagram 4: DFID Results Chain

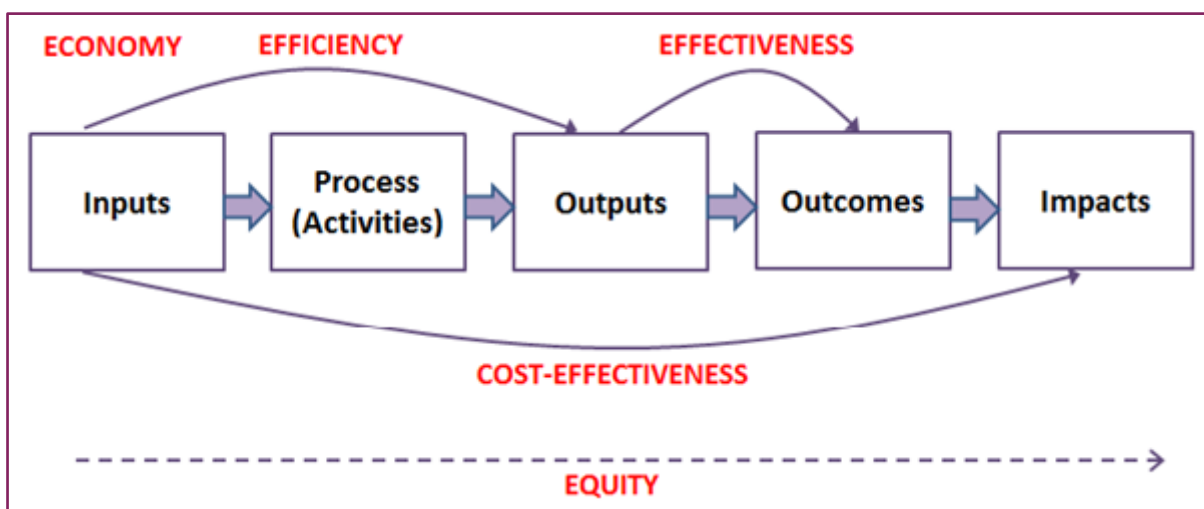


Table 4: VAWG programme results chain example and sample indicators

Inputs –	Process –	Outputs –	Outcomes –	Impacts –
Training courses, campaign development	Delivery of interventions which address VAWG	Number of community change agents trained in addressing VAWG and acting as role models	Community practices (including ‘communities’ within institutions such as police, social work legal services) promote and model non-violent and gender equitable norms	More gender equitable social norms Increased unacceptability of VAWG Reduced VAWG

Value for money depends on the strength of the links in the chain and the underlying assumptions (the theory of change and evidence base) upon which the Results Chain is built. DFID's approach considers the **cost-effectiveness** of interventions, i.e. how much impact an intervention achieves relative to the inputs used (see Diagram 4 and Table 4 with some practical examples of inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes and impacts in the context of addressing VAWG). One way to assess the VfM of different intervention options would be to carry out a Cost Benefit Analysis and compare the cost of achieving the VAWG outcome (typically by measuring health outcomes in terms of mortality and morbidity) and comparing the net present value of different options. Interventions which shift harmful gender norms and increase gender equality are likely to generate multiple outcomes, as gender equality has been shown to be

significantly correlated with other health and economic indicators.¹³² Thus when assessing value for money of VAWG interventions, it is important to recognise the wider indirect benefits/ externalities of reducing VAWG including wider economic, health and educational outcomes.¹³³

In their review of VfM for interventions addressing VAWG Remme et al (2014) conclude that it would be useful to quantify the multiple costs of violence, or the cost to society of not intervening to address VAWG, as social norms underpinning VAWG represent a block on the effectiveness of a range of development initiatives. For example: costs of a young girl not being able to attend school, loss of earnings for a woman injured and prevented from working, medical costs of dealing with VAWGs.

Considering VfM at Project design

Various tools (some similar to those used to decide whether an intervention was needed) can be used during project design through to evaluation to assess VfM:

- Quantitative analysis such as cost benefit analysis, cost effectiveness and unit costs analysis
- Qualitative analysis such as scored cost-benefits analysis (i.e. ratings and weightings) or a scored 3E's assessment
- Sensitivity analysis.

Assessment of VfM at this level can help decide what the best way of achieving the desired outcomes are, and how best to produce the outputs needed.

Ensuring that information is captured to allow assessment of VfM throughout the programme

It is important that the **design of social norms programmes that tackle VAWG includes an M&E framework capable of collecting and measuring VfM information at each level of the logframe** (see Table 5 below) and that once collected, this information is used for decision-making.

¹³² DFID (2010) Key messages from evidence on gender equality.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67469/gender-evidence-papers.pdf

¹³³ Remme et al (2014) What Works to prevent VAWG? Evidence review of approaches to scale up of VAWG programming and assess programme intervention cost-effectiveness and VfM.

Table 5: Measuring VfM of addressing VAWG in programming: Some key questions to ask

4Es	Description	Questions to ask:	
Economy	<i>'A measure of what goes into providing a service'.</i>	<p>Are we or our agents buying inputs of the appropriate quality at the right price?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the start of the results chain, what are your main costs (inputs greater than 10% budget) and the cost drivers of implementing your programme. These could include costs such as: training, design, development or distribution of IEC materials (see UN Women, 2013 for example of input indicators from Spain, Kosovo, Indonesia and Cambodia – these resources also have a range of worksheets).¹³⁴ It is important to look at unit costs¹³⁵ as well as total costs. The objective of quantifying unit costs is not simply to select the cheapest options but rather to track trends, compare costs, identify outliers and ask why. Consider the value of other non-financial inputs such as volunteer time or venue and office space made available for VAWG work. 	Are the M&E systems designed to measure VfM of VAWG interventions
Efficiency	<i>'A measure of productivity' and relates to how well inputs are converted to outputs.</i>	<p>How well do we or our agents convert inputs into outputs? Efficiency measures outputs (quantitative and qualitative) in relation to the inputs used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the programme implemented in the most efficient way? For example: Where there alternative approaches which could have been used? Did the programme make use of learning and information on best practices (these could be local, regional or international best practices. Comparisons could be made with similar programmes or against quality standards for example organisations minimum service delivery standards.^{136,137} This is known as benchmarking and assessing the programme against tools and standards, using accountability tools. <p>N.B. Great care should be taken in attempting to benchmark VfM across different VAWG interventions and contexts. Programmes that are more costly, deliver benefits in difficult circumstances and have benefits that are challenging to measure may still provide good value</p>	

¹³⁴ See for example UN Women (2013)

http://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/browser/files/costing_manual_vaw_unwomen_sea_2013.pdf

¹³⁵ Unit costs calculation methodology needs to be carefully structured. There needs to be transparency of methodologies across a project. Standardised definitions would be required and guidance such as whether or not overhead costs are included in unit costs to help to compare 'like for like' information

¹³⁶ Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards for working with black and minority ethnic (BME) women and girls and harmful practices: Forced marriage (FM), Female genital mutilation (FGM) and 'Honour-based' violence (HBV) Imkaan Accredited Quality Standards <http://imkaan.org.uk/iaqs>

¹³⁷ Akim (2013)

		<p>for money</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit costs¹³⁸ of delivering an intervention is a measure of efficiency, i.e. the cost per output (as opposed to input). For example e.g. cost per participant trained to respond to VAWG, community member exposed to campaign. • Are initiatives delivered on time and in the most cost efficient way? For example, is there good evidence of joint delivery of activities, use of existing delivery structures and opportunities for partnership working or are programmes delivered vertically and in isolation? An indicator could be set to track number of activities which are implemented jointly and the total value of savings made from joint working. 	
Effectiveness	Is the programme delivering its intended objectives	<p>How well are the outputs from an intervention achieving the desired outcome?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective is the programme in delivering its objectives of social norms change regarding VAWG and gender equality? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What tools are there for measuring and monitoring outcomes on VAWG in the programme? (see suggested indicators in upcoming VAWG Guidance: <i>A framework for collating beneficiary numbers across programmes</i>) • What are the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of objectives? 	
Equity	The extent to which <i>benefits are distributed fairly</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is equity being promoted for each of the 3 E's? For example, at input level how equitable are the inputs that are being purchased, choice of suppliers etc. Is the intervention addressing social norms that underpin violence affecting the most vulnerable groups of girls and women? For example, sex workers, women with HIV, refugee and ethnic minority women and children, women and children from lower castes in parts of South Asia, and LBT women, children and youth. 	
Sources: adapted from DFID (2011; 2013b)			

¹³⁸Unit costs calculation methodology needs to be carefully structured. There needs to be transparency of methodologies across a project. Standardised definitions would be required and guidance such as whether or not overhead costs are included in unit costs to help to compare 'like for like' information

VfM Case studies: Soul City, South Africa and Program H, Brazil

A number of interventions to prevent and address violence against women and girls have been found to be effective, but little is known about the costs, value for money, and how to take them to scale.¹³⁹

Remme et al (2014) conducted a review of evidence of VfM (including the three programmes featured in this section). Some of their key conclusions include:

- Most economic evaluations presented data on the unit costs of delivering the intervention, such as cost per participant trained, community member exposed, woman supported.
- There is a wide range in unit costs for similar interventions – such gender training sessions. This variation may be partially due to different costing methods or indicate some potential for efficiency gains. For example, the number of hours of group training sessions used in different intervention models vary widely, and it is not clear what length of training would be most efficient.
- A major weakness of the evidence base is that the costing analyses were of varying quality, and used a range of intervention outputs, making it difficult to compare the relative efficiency of different interventions.
- Only Soul City included cost-effectiveness analysis (not just unit costs).

Box 13: Case studies: measuring VfM

What was measured in all case studies?

- Financial costs – money spent to deliver the intervention
- Economic costs – the value of other non-financial inputs, such as office space and volunteer time
- Unit cost – cost per intervention output produced

What was not measured?

- Costs to participants in interventions
- The breadth of benefits of effective violence prevention.

Soul City is also an informative case for its cost analysis, which provides information on the cost effectiveness of single vs. multi-media campaign outreach. Mass media campaigns are remarkably low in cost compared to face-to-face individual or group training or counselling sessions and infrastructure building interventions. Soul City assessed the cost-effectiveness of its programming based on retroactive staff reporting and costs allocated to Series 4 over three financial years. The study compared financial costs to outcome measures of awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and self-reported action related to domestic violence from the national survey.¹⁴⁰ The cost per-person exposed to a message on violence against women was estimated to be 12 U.S. cents for television, 1 U.S. cent for radio, and 7 U.S. cents for print. The report also broke down costs according to types of outcomes: awareness was priced at 18 U.S. cents, knowledge at 16 U.S. cents, attitudes at 22 U.S. cents, and self-reported action at \$6.92. The cost-analysis also indicated that while multi-media exposure was beneficial, single medium exposure to a greater number of people was more cost-effective.^{141,142}

¹³⁹ Remme et al (2014)

¹⁴⁰ Responses indicating positive outcomes (such as calling the domestic violence hotline and/or saying that domestic violence in unacceptable) were un-weighted, meaning that “two individuals answering one question correctly is of equal importance as one individual answering two questions correctly” and that attitude and action responses are weighted equally (Scheepers 2001, 10)

¹⁴¹ Scheepers (2001)

¹⁴² Paluck and Ball (2010)

Program H - The cost of the social norms marketing campaign was \$14,796.59, just over half the cost of the peer-to-peer education programmes.¹⁴³ The cost per person reached of the social norms marketing plus peer-to-peer programme was \$138.98, whereas for the peer-to-peer program the cost per person was \$84.24. Cost calculations were not available for individuals reached by the social norms marketing campaign only, in part because Program H does not have an estimate of the portion of the population reached by the various aspects of their program. The cost figures therefore overestimate the per person reached cost of the social norms marketing campaign, and highlight the dramatically reduced per-person costs of media campaigns compared with other forms of community interventions to target social norms.¹⁴⁴

Further DFID resources on VfM¹⁴⁵:

- [Principles for VfM indicators](#)
- [Demystifying Unit Costs](#)
- [VfM through the Programme Cycle](#)
- [DFID's approach to VfM](#)
- [Monitoring and Evaluation of DFID's Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\) Programmes. Task 3: A framework for collating beneficiary numbers across programmes \(upcoming\)](#)

¹⁴³ Barker, Nascimento, Pulerwitz and Segundo (2006)

¹⁴⁴ Paluck and Ball (2010)

¹⁴⁵ Internal documents are only available to DFID employees

Annex B: Social norms approach checklist

Adapted from the DFID-funded Voices for Change Programme in Nigeria: 'checklist of tactics'

Success factor	Checklist
1. Change social expectations	
a. If pluralistic ignorance then raise awareness to dispel misconceptions	
b. Shift individual attitudes towards harmful behaviour (i.e. weaken existing norm)	
c. Promote public debate and deliberation around the norm	
d. Promote a positive alternative norm	
e. Provide opportunities for public and collective change.	
2. Publicise the change	
a. Publicise role models and benefits of new behaviour	
b. Avoid reinforcing the negative behaviour	
c. Develop a diffusion strategy to catalyse broader societal change	
3. Reinforcing new positive behaviours and norms	
a. Provide opportunities for new behaviour	
b. Create new rewards and social sanctions	