What works for social norm change to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG)

Sarah McCook
1. Introductions and overview
2. Key concepts
   Social norms and VAWG – what’s the connection?
3. Activity
   Social norms across the socio-ecological model
4. Strategies that work
   Lessons from practice
5. Activity
   Identifying and promoting positive social norms to prevent VAWG
6. Wrap-up
Key concepts

Social norms and VAWG – what’s the connection?
What drives violence against women and girls?

- Male authority and power over the household
- Harsh parenting practices
- Prioritising family unity
- Poor communication and use of violence as conflict resolution
- Shared beliefs that men should be breadwinners and women should be caregivers

- Experience of violence during childhood
- Attitudes about gender roles and the use of violence
- Socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., age, employment, education)
- Alcohol and substance abuse

GLOBAL
- Global ideologies
- Militarisation
- Religious fundamentalism
- Globalisation (economic, cultural)

SOCIETY
- Discriminatory family law
- Lack of economic rights for women
- Men’s control of decision-making
- Level of development or poverty
- Shared beliefs that men deserve greater prestige and value in society
- Conflict and normalisation of violence in general

COMMUNITY
- Emphasis on women’s purity and family honour
- Acceptance of wife beating
- Men’s right to discipline and control women’s behaviour
- Shared beliefs that women and girls should be blamed for experiences of violence
- Rigid ideas about masculinity and femininity

FAMILY / RELATIONSHIP

INDIVIDUAL

What works for social norm change to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) - Key concepts
What are social norms?

A **social norm** is a collectively shared belief about what others in the group **actually** do (what is typical) or what other is the group **should** do (what is appropriate).

There are 3 points to identifying social norms:

1. A **shared belief** about typical or appropriate behaviour;
2. The **reference group** who holds that shared belief; and
3. **Social sanctions or rewards** that insure group compliance with the social norm.
What works for social norm change to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) - Key concepts

- A wife should always obey her husband
- If a woman is raped, she is to blame for putting herself in that situation
- A woman cannot refuse to have sex with her husband
- Men are entitled to sex
- Intimate partner violence is a private topic, to be resolved in the family
- Men must be the primary breadwinners
- Men have the right to discipline their wives, with force if necessary
Social norms drive violence against women in two key ways

1. Some harmful or violent behaviours are held in place by gendered social norms: shared beliefs that the violent behaviour is typical and appropriate.

For example:

- It is acceptable for a man to beat his wife if he believes she has been unfaithful to him.
- A husband is justified in hitting his wife if she disobeys his orders or does not complete household tasks to his satisfaction.
- Physical discipline is an appropriate form of punishment for a man to use against his wife and children, with force if necessary.
Social norms drive violence against women in two key ways

2 Other violent behaviours are underpinned by other gendered social norms that create violence-supportive environments or situations. For example, those around gender roles, family privacy, and male authority that create expectations that perpetuate men’s use of violence.

For example:

• A woman cannot refuse to have sex with her husband.
• Men are entitled to have sex and women are responsible for controlling men’s sexual urges.
• Men have the final say in all family matters and should not be questioned.
• Family violence is a private matter and should not be discussed with others.
Most of these social norms are gender norms

Gender norms define femininities (what it means to be a woman) and masculinities (what it means to be a man) in different societies. They shape women and men’s identities, relationships, and the allocation of power and resources within family, community and society.

“In our community, a man should be…”

“In our community, a woman should be…”
What drives violence against women and girls?

- Global ideologies
  - Militarisation
  - Religious fundamentalism
  - Globalisation (economic, cultural)

- Societal factors
  - Discriminatory family law
  - Lack of economic rights for women
  - Men’s control of decision-making
  - Level of development or poverty
  - Shared beliefs that men deserve greater prestige and value in society
  - Conflict and normalisation of violence in general

- Community factors
  - Emphasis on women’s purity and family honour
  - Acceptance of wife beating
  - Men’s right to discipline and control women’s behaviour
  - Shared beliefs that women and girls should be blamed for experiences of violence
  - Rigid ideas about masculinity and femininity

- Family/relationship factors
  - Male authority and power over the household
  - Harsh parenting practices
  - Prioritising family unity
  - Poor communication and use of violence as conflict resolution
  - Shared beliefs that men should be breadwinners and women should be caregivers

- Individual factors
  - Experience of violence during childhood
  - Attitudes about gender roles and the use of violence
  - Socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., age, employment, education)
  - Alcohol and substance abuse

What works for social norm change to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) - Key concepts
Activity 1

Identifying and promoting positive social norms to prevent VAWG
What works for social norm change to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) - Activity 1

- Judge
- Parliamentarian
- Radio announcer
- Betty
- Benja
- Police officer
- Market seller
- Local leader
- Benja’s parent
- Benja’s friend
- Betty’s in-law
- Betty’s friend

Source: Adapted from SASA!
Lessons from practice

What works for social norm change to prevent VAWG?
Proposing positive social norms
## What works to prevent violence against women and girls?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long-term and intensive efforts</th>
<th>Informed by a strong theory of change</th>
<th>Address the root causes of violence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognise and address the intersections of different forms of discrimination</td>
<td>Include multiple and mutually reinforcing components over time</td>
<td>Work across multiple sectors or multiple levels of the socio-ecological model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a gender-transformative approach</td>
<td>Engage people of all genders</td>
<td>Provide tailored and inclusive content for the target audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What works for social norm change to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) - Lessons from practice
Theory of change:

Positive Harmful social norms

Respectful Violent behaviour

Supportive environment

Reference group mirrors changes

Individual

Changed perceptions

Changed behaviours

What works for social norm change to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) - Lessons from practice
The goal is to create new positive norms / expectations

- Emphasise positive norms to replace harmful ones. Messaging needs to communicate what the new behaviour or attitude should be.
- Awareness campaigns can backfire by sending the message violence is common or normal.
- Negative messaging does not promote positive social norms.
- Changing individual attitudes is not enough – individuals need to see and hear from others in their reference groups.
- Diffusion is key – messaging needs to go beyond the immediate audience. Promote public debate and deliberation.
- Take a gender transformative approach to fundamentally change rigid and harmful stereotypes of masculinity and femininity.
What does not work?

Emphasise positive norms to replace harmful ones.
Messaging needs to communicate what the new behaviour or attitude should be.

Source: www.mwendengao.com
What does not work?

Awareness campaigns can backfire by sending the message violence is normal or common.

Negative messaging does not promote positive social norms.

Source: www.asianpacificpost.com
Awareness raising vs Social norm change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness-raising campaigns</th>
<th>Social norm change campaigns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single initiative</td>
<td>Different levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term raising of awareness</td>
<td>Different activities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Holistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Long term change of gendered social norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different stakeholders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Equality Institute and Oxfam Solomon Islands 2017

What works for social norm change to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) - Lessons from practice
Lessons from practice in Latin America

In LAC, we use the term “Imaginarios sociales”. There’s no translation, but it would be something like social norms and worldview combined.

Basically it means we need to consider 3 levels when thinking about shifting norms/imaginarios.

We’ve used this framework as the basis for power mapping and developing theories of change.

Thanks to Juan Carlos Arita, LAC PPM, for the graphic and thinking!

Julie Diallo: jdiallo@oxfam.org.uk

What works for social norm change to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) - Lessons from practice
“Actúa” was launched in 3 cities in Bolivia on 14 Feb, with a focus on shifting social norms around romantic love amongst young people – jealousy, control, male protection.

Oxfam is collaborating with 2 partners – Coordinadora de la Mujer & Colectivo Rebeldia in the co-creation and implementation of the campaign.

Formative research was done with focus groups and surveys with young people. Campaign messaging and materials were also tested with young people.

What works for social norm change to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) - Lessons from practice

Julie Diallo: jdiallo@oxfam.org.uk
• A combination of offline and online actions – street art, hip hop, skate, peer-to-peer networks, social experiments, TV celebrity slots, and GIFs, memes and FB community

• Innovative partnership with the city’s public transportation system (cable car) has been set up – providing spaces in stations for young people to reach the thousands of passengers each day

• So far 20,000 young people have signed up to be part of the campaign – although challenge is to reach young men – currently only 23% are male

Julie Diallo: jdiallo@oxfam.org.uk
Some key learnings so far

- Need to be precise about which social norms we want to change and amongst which specific target group
- Groups of young people are already modelling alternative behaviours and social norms, and challenging the status quo. Make this visible through the campaign!
- Peer-to-peer support networks are key for young people have more confidence and support to transform norms, and a safe space to model alternative behaviour.
- Regional and global solidarity networks are important, particularly in drawing attention to specific cases of threats, intimidation or femicides
- For reaching young people, an unbranded campaign, that seems more spontaneous and authentic, seems best approach. There is suspicion and lack of trust towards organisations and institutions.

Julie Diallo: jdiallo@oxfam.org.uk
Some key learnings so far

- Use language, symbols, trends and spaces that young people themselves are using – ideally led by young people themselves.
- The reference group is key, and as such peer to peer communication as well. The effectiveness of mass comms strategies will depend on recreating this peer to peer dynamic – generating empathy.
- Look for influencers on social media, who are part of target group or particularly influential – useful to couple this to offline interaction – for example, filmed social experiments.
- Consider unusual alliances – eg. YouTubers have cult followings and influence amongst young people.

Julie Diallo: jdiallo@oxfam.org.uk
Activity 2

Identifying and communicating positive social norms
Identifying and communicating positive social norms (20 minutes)

- Form small groups.
- Each group will be given a harmful social norm associated with IPV, and a character/characters from the first activity.
- Brainstorm a positive social norm and propose key messages that could generate norm change with that character(s).
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