How can social norms theory inform violence prevention work?*

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*To be accompanied by presentation from Ben Cislaghi, Lecturer in Social Norms, Centre for Gender, Health and Violence at London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
Objectives

- Introduce basic concepts and definitions
- Discuss diagnosis and measurement
- Share applied learning from violence prevention initiatives (DFID, WHO, UNICEF, LSHTM and others)
What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the term “social norms”?

Respond using the chat panel:
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, 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.

Source: DFID Guidance Note: Shifting Social Norms to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (2016)
Three components

- Shared beliefs about others
- Exist within reference groups
- (Dis)Approval of reference group helps maintain them

Non-social (i.e. personal) beliefs

- What I favour / disfavour – **Attitude**

- What I believe to be morally right/wrong – **Moral beliefs**

- What I believe to be true/false – **Factual beliefs**

Reference groups

- Instead of thinking in terms of individuals or groups, can think about relationships:
  - Who trusts whom? (and for what?)
  - Who gossips with each other?
  - Who is in the same family?
  - Who intermarries?
  - Who are neighbors?

- There are many more!
  - **Social roles**: friend of, teacher of...
  - **Affect**: likes, loves, hates...
  - **Money transfers**: pays, buys from, sells to...
  - **Acts**: eats with, attacks, bullies...
  - **Co-occurrence**: uses same water as, goes to same health center as, uses same toilet as...

Source: *Why People Do What They Do?: A Social Norms Manual for Zimbabwe and Swaziland.*
Exercise: Relationships

Think about a particular behaviour related to violence affecting children (VaC).

Think about the child’s perspective: Who does the child trust and why?

Think about the parents’ perspective: Who do the parents trust and why?
An example of group work for this exercise:

SEXUAL VIOLENCE OF CHILDREN BY CLOSE RELATIVES

Child’s Perspective
- Blames self; feels heartbroken, vulnerable, confused, sad; believes trust has been broken; believes she could have provoked the rape; if boy, can have feeling of being feminized; may think it’s because “I am beautiful”

Child’s Trust and Why
- Depends on who is the perpetrator, whether the child knows that sexual abuse is a crime, and the age of the child
- Can’t trust a friend, mother, teacher or neighbour; may not tell anyone (e.g., a victim being raped by police when she tried to report)
- May go to church organization

Parents’ Perspective
- The case may be swept under the rug or solved within family.
- If breadwinner, also swept under rug (financial dependence)
- Some can report to police

Parents’ Trust and Why
- Traditional community leaders; extended family; police

Approval & disapproval

- Part of maintaining social norms
- Reference group may reward those who comply and punish violators ("sanctions")

*Powerful when considering how to change harmful existing norms or creating helpful new norms.*
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.

Source: DFID Guidance Note: Shifting Social Norms to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (2016)
So, is violence a social norm?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yekbyWhHoZU&feature=youtu.be

Robert Blum, MD MPH PhD
Principal Investigator, Global Early Adolescent Study (GEAS)
Johns Hopkins University
http://www.geastudy.org/
Urie Bronfenbrenner
1917-2005
Developmental psychologist
Socio-ecological model
Application: Intimate Partner Violence

Source: Heise 2011
Revised Conceptual Framework for Partner Violence
Examples of social and gender norms that support VAWG

- A man has a right to assert power over a woman
- 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
- Divorce is shameful
- Sex is a man’s right in marriage

Source: WHO/LSHTM 2010
UNICEF—Innocenti Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children

*work in progress!

- Conflict
- Gender inequality
- Economic inequality
- Migration

- Poor School Governance
- Weak Child Protection Systems

- Harmful social and gender norms

- Gender
- Age
- Education access
- Parent’s marital status

More information at: https://www.unicef-irc.org/research/274
Gender Norms = a category of social norms

- Widely held beliefs about what is typical and appropriate behaviour for men and women, and boys and girls
- 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.

Source: DFID Guidance Note (2016)
See B. Cislaghi’s presentation for our summary points.

We hope the examples shared serve as useful resources. The actors involved are very collaborative and we urge you to connect and think through these things together! We have much to learn from each other.
References & Resources


Learning Initiative on Norms, Exploitation and Abuse (LINEA) (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine): http://blogs.lshtm.ac.uk/samegroup/projects-2/linea/

Global Early Adolescent Study (Johns Hopkins University): http://www.geastudy.org/


SASA! (http://raisingvoices.org/sasa) and related studies, for example: Abramsky, T et al. (2014) Findings from the SASA! Study: a cluster randomized controlled trial to assess the impact of a community mobilization intervention to prevent violence against women and reduce HIV risk in Kampala, Uganda. BMC Medicine 12:122.