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"When it comes to silencing women, western culture has had thousands of years of practice."

Mary Beard, Historian

Key questions

- How have gender norms changed over the past quarter-century?

- What has supported and blocked changes to gender norms in four key areas?

- How can change happen faster and become robust enough to resist backlash and withstand crises?

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What are norms?

Gender norms are the **informal rules** of society that define how people of a particular gender are **expected to behave**.

They determine what people **think** and what they **do**, and they shape the **attitudes and behaviour** of women and men and all other genders in relation to each other.

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Invisible gender norms

"Norms are more like invisible "**guard rails**" that shape and narrow people's thinking, behaviours, and opportunities. So, norms often show up as a kind of negative power, as absence rather than presence: **doors that just didn't open**, choices that couldn't be made, opportunities that just seemed out of reach.

Riki Wilchins, TrueChild

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"
Just the way we do things here.
"

Intersectional feminism

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"*a prism for seeing the way in which various forms of **inequality often operate together** and exacerbate each other ... We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status. What's often missing is how some people are subject to all of these, and **the experience is not just the sum of its parts**.*"

Kimberle Crenshaw, lawyer and civil rights advocate

Change the system to change the norm

Individuals create and maintain institutions and re-enact within them many of the same norms that shape their personal lives.

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"
You cannot fit women into a structure that is already coded as male. **You have to change the structure.** That means thinking about power differently. It means decoupling it from public prestige. It means thinking collaboratively about **the power of followers, not just the leaders**.
It means, above all, thinking about power as an attribute or a verb ("to power") not as a possession.

Mary Beard, Historian
"

Sequence of change

Action on norms at different levels

Policy enabling environment
Community, organisational
Interpersonal
Individual

Political voice, civic action and rights protection

Workplace and economic engagement

Family and sexual and reproductive health and rights

Education
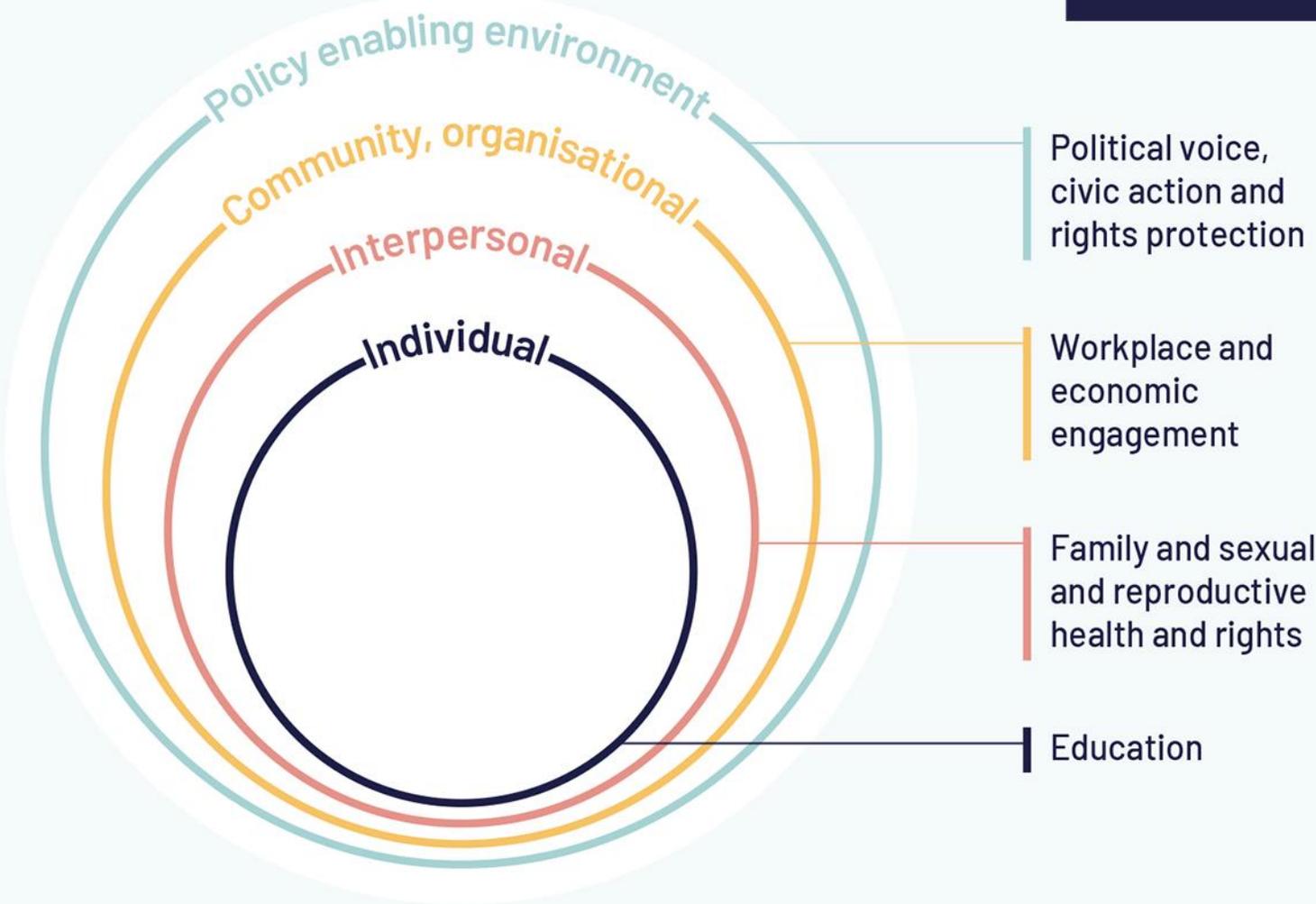
Source: The authors, adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979).

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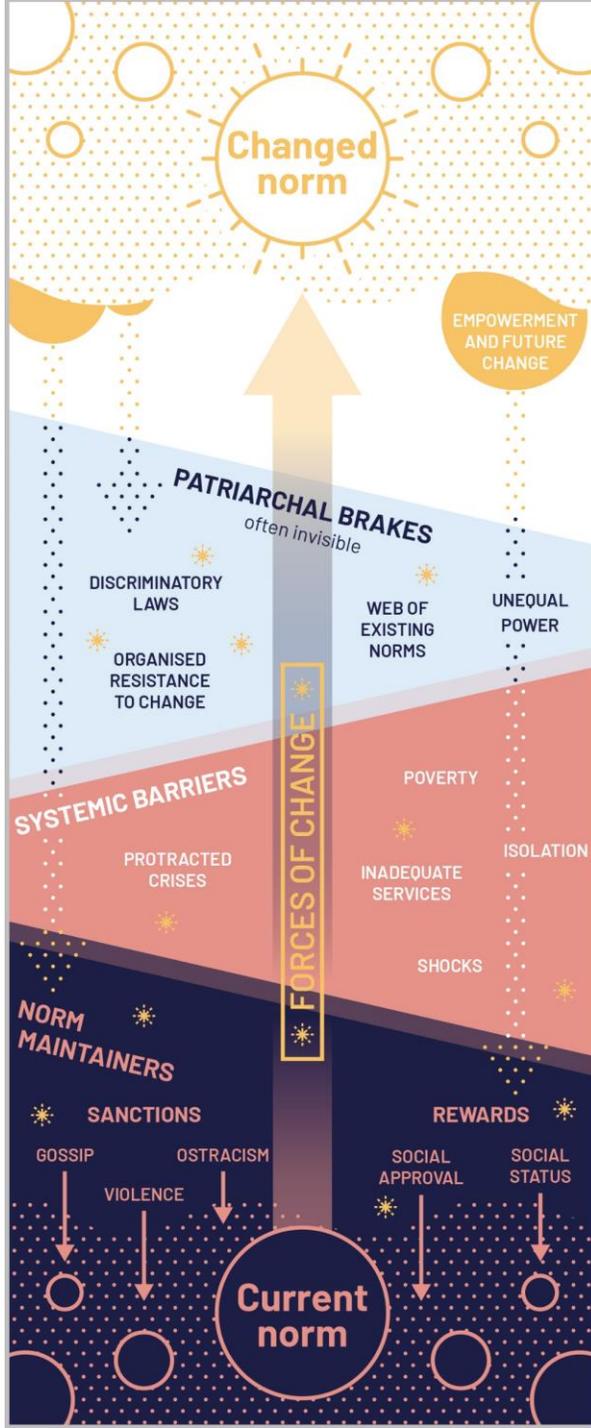
A conceptual framework: a path from a current norm to a changed norm

- Current norm

- Norm maintainers

- Systemic barriers

- Patriarchal brakes

- Forces of change

- Changed norm

Prominent barriers against gender norm change

Prominent barriers to change

CONTROL OVER WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' BODIES AND SEXUALITY

VIOLENCE: VERBAL, SEXUAL AND PHYSICAL

Source: Author analysis
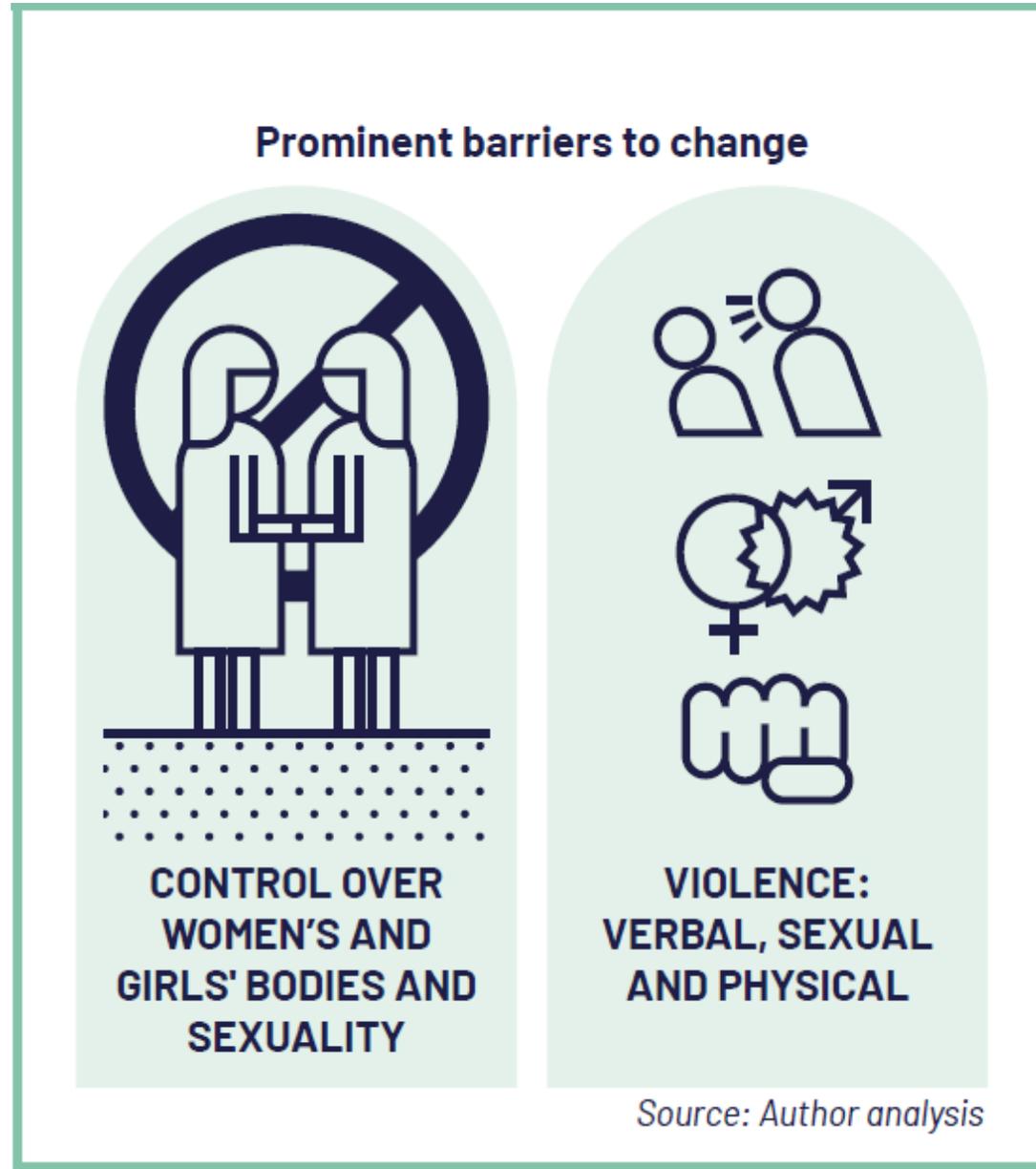
Compiling the data – sources

- Quantitative data going back 25 years – World Values Survey, DHS and World Development Indicators (using proxies of behaviour and attitudes as quant norms measurement is new)

- Qualitative research in Uganda and Nepal - part of ALIGN History and Change series – with middle aged and older women looking back at norm change over their lifetimes
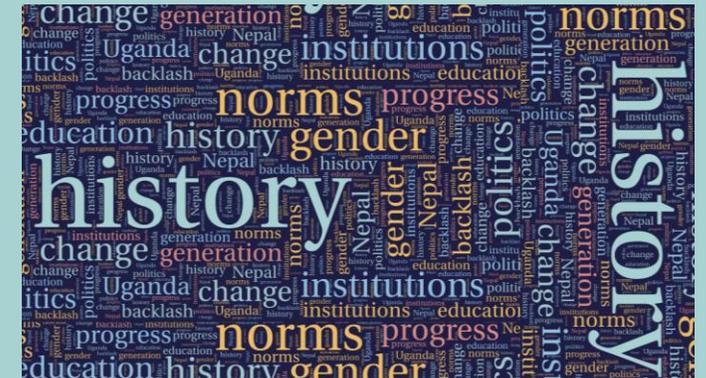
- Extensive literature review

Key insights from trend data

How have norms changed?

Attitudes to university education have become more gender-equal in 40 of 48 countries

The proportion of women who considered wife-beating ever to be acceptable fell in 41 out of 46 countries.

Since 1995

The proportion of people who agree that if jobs are scarce, men should have priority has fallen in 38 of 50 countries and rose in 12

The share of people worldwide who believe men make better political leaders has fallen from 50% to 35%

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Some comparative insights

Huge geographical variation between and within regions	E.g. norms around gender roles, women in leadership roles, and acceptability of wife-beating
But some consistency within countries	E.g. Japan, Pakistan
Differences by age groups –often small and sometimes defied expectations	E.g. attitudes to university education, mothers working and being a housewife is as fulfilling as working for pay
Varied relationship between attitudes and outcomes	E.g. attitudes to mothers of pre-schoolers working and women's labour force participation (strong) Attitudes to women leaders and women's political representation (moderate) Attitudes to mothers of pre-schoolers working and men's time spent on unpaid care (weak)
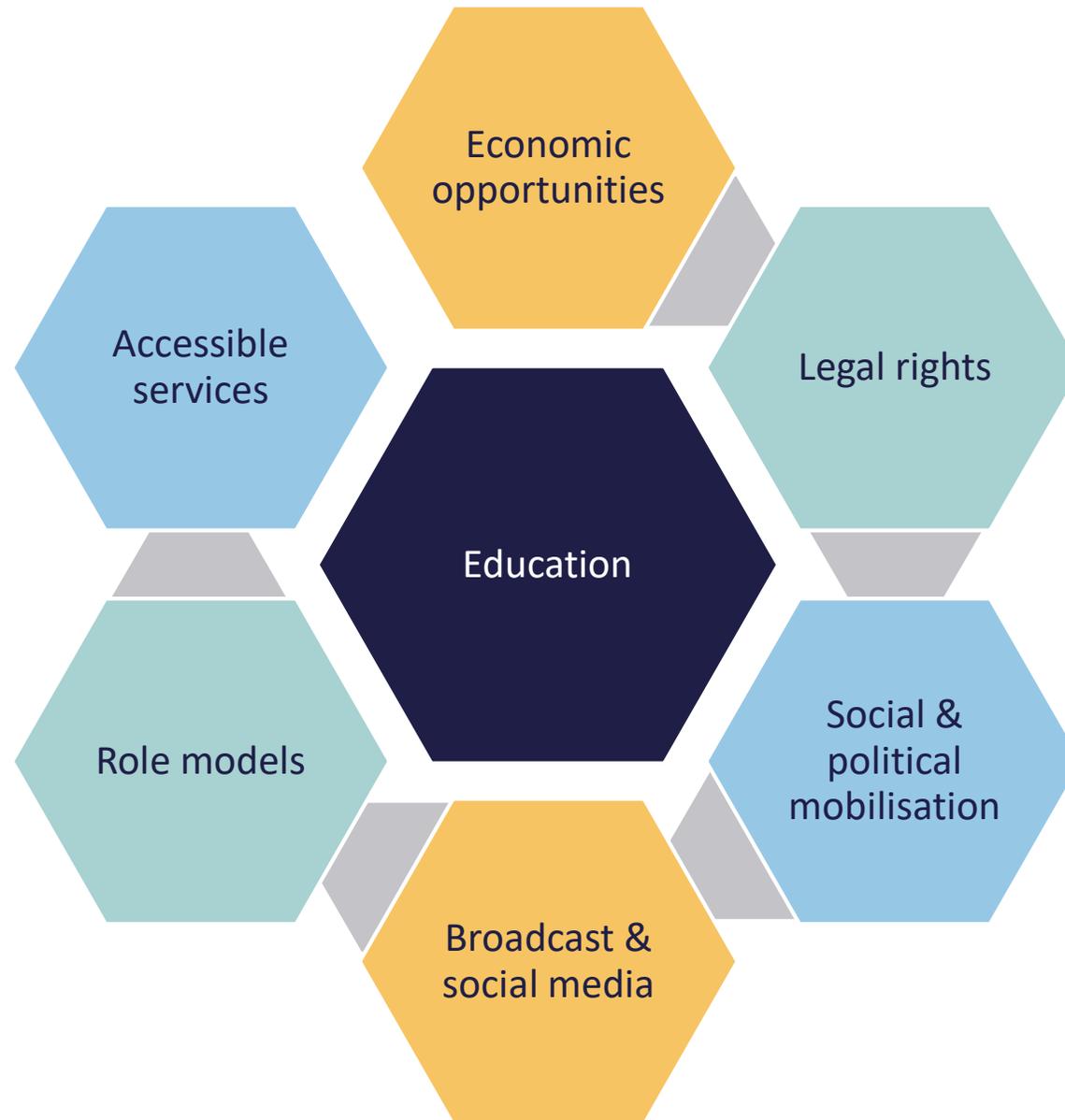
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Drivers of change

- Economic opportunities
- Legal rights
- Accessible services
- Education
- Social & political mobilisation
- Role models
- Broadcast & social media

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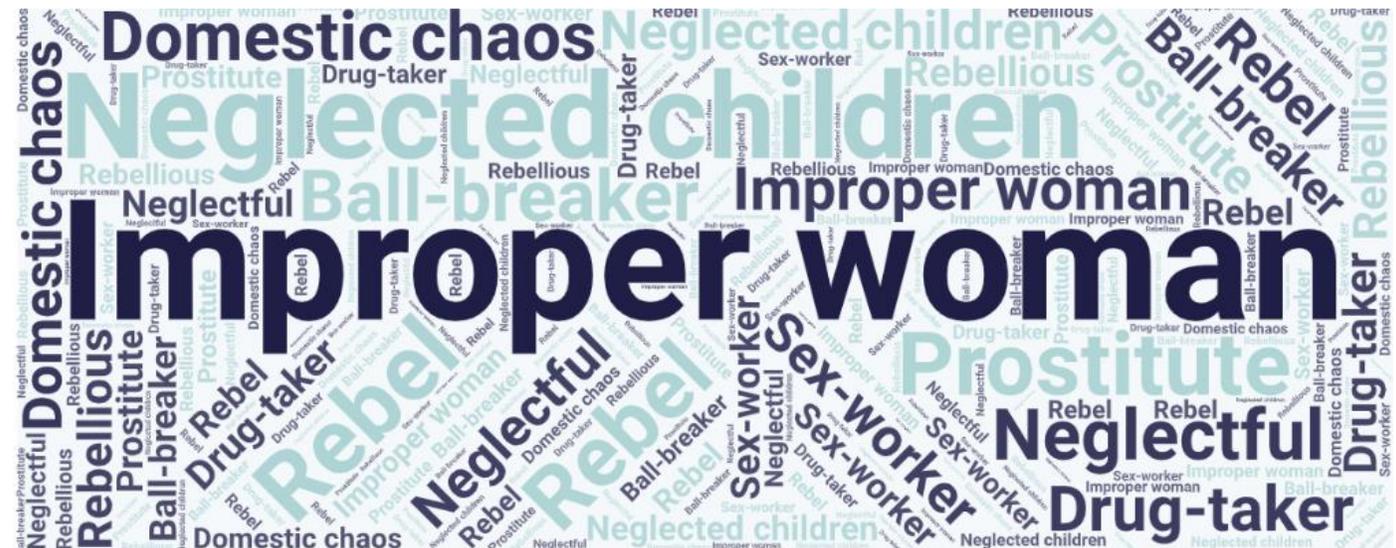
Patriarchal brakes: unequal domestic roles

In 2018, 606 million women and 41 million men of working age were unavailable for employment because of care responsibilities (ILO)

'The psyches of men have not changed with the changing realities – they still expect to be waited on …. They cannot stop you from working /earning, but they can leave all of the household responsibilities and expenditures to you!'

# Gender-based violence: reflecting and reinforcing gender norms

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High levels across all 4 areas the report focuses on:

- 50-75% of LGBT young people in 7 Latin American countries experienced verbal abuse, 20-40% physical violence at school

- 10-25% women in ILO/ Gallup 2017 study of 142 countries said abuse or discrimination at work was significant problem

- 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence

- 82% of female politicians in 39 countries had experienced psychological violence; 44% had received violent threats

Implications for action

Action at different levels/with different actors
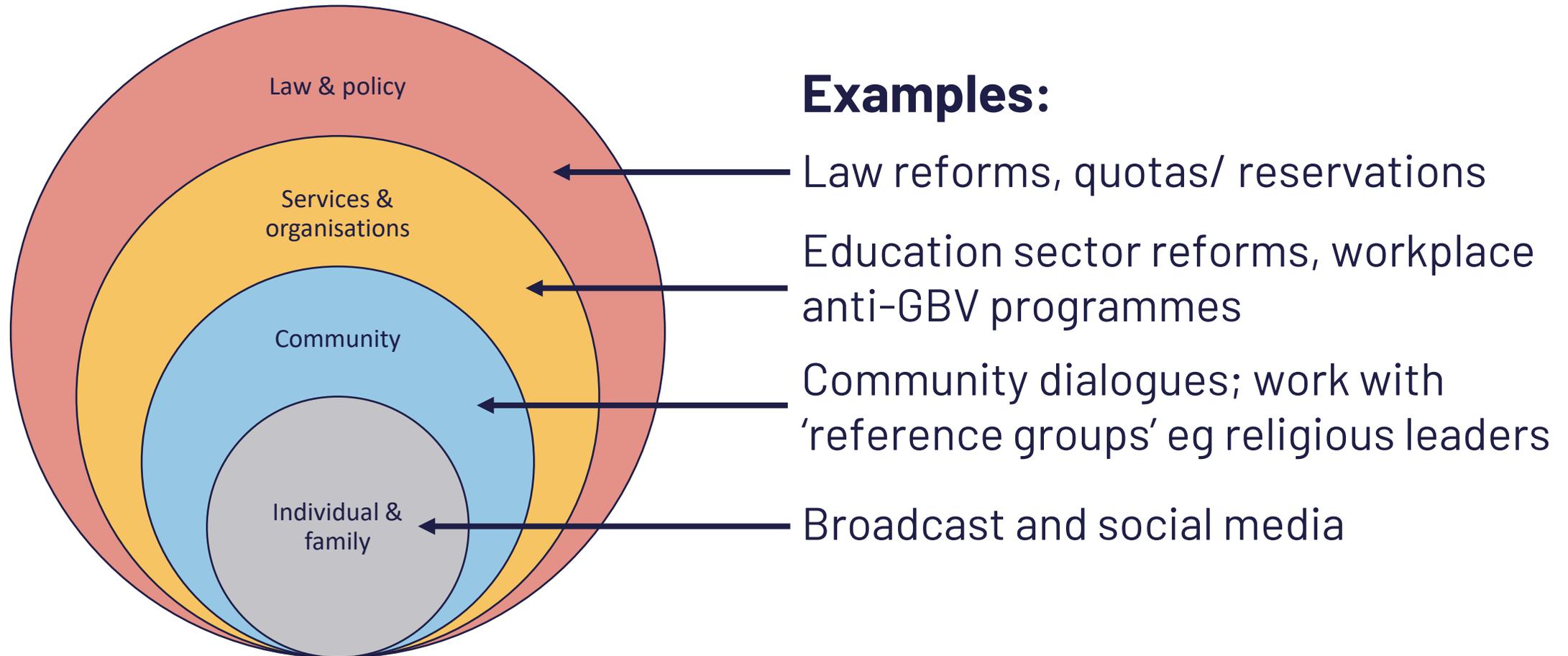
Law & policy

Services & organisations

Community

Individual & family

Examples:

Law reforms, quotas/ reservations

Education sector reforms, workplace anti-GBV programmes

Community dialogues; work with 'reference groups' eg religious leaders

Broadcast and social media

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How to support norm change drivers

Driver	Implications
Education	Huge potential – more likely to be realised if gender equality mainstreamed in education systems, curricula and at school level. Crucial impact for people of all genders
Quality, accessible services (health care, infrastructure)	Investment in accessible SRHR services underpins norms around contraceptive use; gender-equitable sexuality education helps drive change in norms. Safe transport infrastructure helps remove barriers to women's work.
Economic opportunities	Make substantial difference in all areas – the unthinkable can quickly become normal if it's financially rewarding. Support women's increased access to work and control of income

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How to support norm change drivers

Driver	Implications
Legal rights	Play important symbolic role as well as practical driver of change; publicise change and ensuring access to justice for poorest a neglected element of norm change.
Social and political mobilisation	Space for civic action matters; women's and other pro-equality organisations driving change at different levels need support
Broadcast and social media	Boosting representation and visibility of (different groups of) women and girls matters; regulation to prevent cyber-violence and 'fake news' critical.
Role models	Important for normalising women's presence in all spheres, aspiration and empowerment; school-based exposure, anti-discrimination policies; political empowerment programmes, mass media

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What are the challenges and gaps?

- Need for change in both **hearts and minds** and institutions/systems

- Think and work **multi-sectorally** – actions in one area can be much more than the sum of their parts

- Focus on actions with **potential at scale**

- **Be persistent** - progress often stalls before moving on (related to patriarchal brakes, systemic barriers and crises)

- **Unequal impacts** of change processes among different groups – need for stronger focus on those left behind or adversely affected

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Thank you for listening.

Any questions?

View the report:

alignplatform.org/gender-power-progress