Advancing Social Norms Practice in Nigeria

Funder
The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Managing Partner
The Center on Gender Equity and Health at the University of California San Diego

Timeline
September 2019 – October 2022

Project Objectives

1. Integrate social norms into ongoing and new normative and behavior change initiatives.
2. Build sustained capacity in public and private sector institutions in northern Nigeria.
3. Improve gender and social norms program implementation and evaluation.
4. Integrate evidence-based social and gender norms approaches in the Nigeria For Women Project.
5. Generate and share knowledge globally to address critical health and development issues.
6. Articulate programs and policies that facilitate/hinder progress for Women's Empowerment Collectives in Nigeria.

Background

Social norms—the often unspoken rules that govern behavior—shape almost every aspect of human life. The impact of harmful social norms, such as expectations related to gender-based violence, childbearing and women's economic engagement, has received increasing attention over the last decade. As more programs seek to foster norms that support healthy behaviors, there is an opportunity to advance understanding of social norms: what they are, how to measure them, how they influence behavior and how to scale up normative interventions that show promise. Given expansion of the number of researchers and practitioners working on social norms, it is a critical moment to make the latest knowledge and evidence on social norms widely accessible and to provide opportunities for practitioners and researchers from different disciplines and sectors to share and produce knowledge. Moreover, as social norms initiatives expand, opportunities for reflection on what constitutes promising practices for shifting norms, the costs and scalability of these approaches, good quality measurement and the ethics of social norms transformation becomes ever more urgent.

A Learning Collaborative to Advance Social Norms Practice

The vision for the "Advancing Social Norms Practice in Nigeria Project" is to support effective programming and research that addresses the norms that influence the success of development programs. This project establishes a Learning Collaborative in Nigeria to strengthen social norms practice—particularly in areas of the country with weak health systems. Representatives from the government, NGOs, researchers and donors will form a social norm community of practice (CoP) to strengthen networks, build sustained expertise and capacity in Nigerian organizations and institutions, and support good quality programming.

This CoP will address gender and social norms across multiple health areas—maternal, neonatal and child health (MNCH), routine immunization, nutrition, malaria, family planning and women's economic empowerment. It will foster collaboration across technical areas by focusing on the social determinants common across health and development outcomes. The Learning Collaborative is supported by M-SPACE (midspace.org), the local meeting organizer and host organization, and will collaborate closely with members of the Global Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change, who will provide mentorship and technical assistance, and East African and Francophone CoPs.

The goals of this CoP are to:
1. Share social norms evidence, approaches and resources.
2. Integrate social norms into ongoing and new normative and behavior change initiatives.
3. Improve social norms program implementation and evaluation.
4. Strengthen networks within and across norms-shifting programs to improve learning and practice,
   especially in areas of the country with weak health systems.
5. Generate and share knowledge between practitioners in Nigeria and the global community.

Support for Nigeria for Women Project

The Advancing Social Norms Practice in Nigeria project provides technical assistance to the Nigeria for Women Project to build an evidence-based programmatic approach to social norm change and to employ the latest thinking in measurement of norms in the monitoring and evaluation of their progress. The Nigeria for Women Project, an initiative that was co-designed by the Federal Government of Nigeria and The World Bank, supports women's economic and social empowerment with the goal of reducing economic and gender inequality.

Establishing Pre- and In-Service Training

Another component of this project is to integrate social norm change theory, policy, practice and research into pre-and in-service training to increase sustained capacity for applying a social norms-aware lens to social and behavior change programs in Nigeria. Partners will work with faculty and key resource staff at Nigerian Universities to build knowledge and expertise, integrate content into undergraduate and graduate programs, offer short term certificate courses and support practicum opportunities. Course content may include social norms theory and evidence, diagnosis, program design, monitoring and evaluation, measurement, adaptation and scale, ethical issues and cost analysis.

The Global Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change
This project brings global social norms experts from the Global Learning Collaborative from five organizations (Overseas Development Initiative, Makerere University, Institute for Reproductive Health, FHI360, and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), together with the Center on Gender Equity and Health, to provide distance and on-the-ground support and partnership to Nigerian partners who will build capacity and implement programs. The Global Learning Collaborative to Advance Normative Change is a global network of researchers, practitioners and donors organizations collaborating to advance social norms theory, measurement and practice: https://www.alignplatform.org/learning-collaborative

The Curve
The Curve—a sister project managed by M&C Saatchi and also funded by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation—is aimed at increasing the use of data for decision-making and showing how continuous learning and adaptive programming approaches can improve health intervention performance. This program is running in parallel and may include representatives from organizations also represented in the Learning Collaborative CoP, but they are not a single project.

THE LEARNING COLLABORATIVE
TO ADVANCE NORMATIVE CHANGE