Identifying strategies for norm change

> ！
>
> *This brief summarizes the main concepts of the third webinar in our introductory series of social norms trainings for the Learning Collaborative to Advance Social Norms Practice in Nigeria. This series of four webinars will lay the foundation for understanding social norms, different approaches to identify them, strategies for norm change, and monitoring and evaluation for social norms programs.*

Introduction

In developing norm change strategies, it is important for us to think about how change happens. If we don't spend enough time investing in understanding change, we may find our programming does not have the results we anticipate.

Change is a process. It may take time and it can sometimes be quite a long journey. Changing norms can sometimes be particularly difficult, so it requires more work and analysis from us. Changing norms goes beyond just about communicating knowledge to people. Many programmes are often designed based on the thinking that knowledge changes attitudes and then behaviours change. But it is actually more complex. *Norms change when enough people see that enough people are changing.* There is no precise number to determine this—the definition of 'enough' differs across contexts. Where norms are strong, new behaviours will take time to achieve. We may need a critical mass of people who are ready to adopt new behaviours. Drivers of norm change may include: economic development, war, laws, globalisation,

reach of media, urbanisation, migration, increased access to education, and greater use of technology. Our analysis should reflect these other factors. We need to have a 'Theory of Change' that describes how we expect change will occur in relation to our particular issue.[i] We also need to think through a number of key questions:

- *What interventions have already been used and what is the evidence (evaluations) for their success or failure?*
- *What is the goal of our intervention? Are we trying to stop an old norm, change an old norm or create a new norm?*

Four Norm Change Strategies

There are four main strategies that can be used to bring about norm change: laws and policies, mass media, personalised normative feedback, and group discussions.

Strategy 1

Laws and policies involve legislating change. Examples include the work by Antanas Mockus. Antanas Mockus, while acting as the mayor of Bogota, used mime artists who would use mimicry and mockery to challenge the actions of anyone acting outside the law, e.g. people who crossed the road without taking notice of traffic lights. In this more theatrical approach, spectators would laugh along with the mime artists as others in the community were mocked. In this way, creative methods were used to maintain laws.

Strategy 2

Traditional mass media approaches share information about the harmful effects of a practice. Mass media campaigns that aim to change social norms do not focus exclusively on the harmful effect of a given practice, but highlight that large percentages of the population are against that practice or are abandoning it. The goal

is to change social norms: people's perceptions about what others around them do and approve of. This strategy of using media for social norms change was the very first approach to change social norms and was originally called the "social norms approach" as created originally by Alan Berkowitz. To do so, media campaigns can use a range of techniques like radio broadcasts, billboards, theatre/role plays and role model approaches etc. A great example of this is the Bell Bajao campaign in India, which used TV, radio, print and online media to encourage communities to 'interrupt' domestic violence, by ringing the doorbell of homes when they heard violence occurring. Their advertisements normalised the role of an ordinary community member in interrupting violence, making it seem like this was acceptable.

Strategy 3
With the term "normative feedback" we refer to providing personalised information to people about how they are performing compared to their peers. This approach has been mostly used to reduce electricity consumption by telling people how much they were consuming compared to their neighbour. Other examples include sending SMS to drivers that stop at petrol stations, letting them know if they are consuming more petrol than the majority of the people driving on that road.

Strategy 4
Discussion groups include community conversations that create opportunities for critical reflection. They are particularly effective when working with a people-led approach in mind, as they help group members identify the issues they want to work on and strategies the best solutions to change the norms related to them. Tostan's community empowerment programme, for instance, facilitates community discussions over three years. These discussions often culminate in

public declarations against harmful practices. These declarations aim to change perceptions among the public about what people in their community approve of.

Identifying the right primary strategy
How do we pick the right strategy? We suggest a few key questions to consider:

- *Are norms a misrepresentation of reality? If so, then normative feedback may be effective because this strategy focuses on correcting misconceptions about the prevalence of a particular norm.*
- *Where are norms active? In the society or a specific group? If in society, maybe mass media might work. If in a specific group, reflection groups may be more effective.*
- *Is there just one norm? If so, then normative feedback may work. If there are many norms, normative feedback may be more difficult, so it might be more appropriate to use mass media or discussion groups.*
- *Are there factors other than norms which are relevant to this issue—and do they play a limited role or an important role?*
- *Is it intervention targeted at the people carrying out that particular behaviour, or the reference groups that influence them? Or both? In thinking about targeting, it is important to engage with both males and females.*
- *Who will this target group influence? How will change spread in the broader community as a result?*

The Learning Collaborative to Advance Social Norms Practice in Nigeria