

## BASELINE ASSESSMENT REPORT

# Addressing Social and Gender Norms in Eastern Africa: Knowledge, Challenges, Approaches and Networks

### Background

Co-hosts of the Eastern Africa Learning Collaborative on Social and Gender Norms (EALC), CARE International in Uganda and Makerere University School of Women and Gender Studies, completed a baseline study to inform the development of a learning collaborative to advance social norms research and practice in the Eastern Africa Region between August and December 2020. The baseline assessment sought to document social and gender norms work currently being implemented in the Eastern Africa sub-region and understand how organisations are working together on social and gender norms practice, both in the region and globally.

### Demographics

The baseline assessment consisted of an online quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. Sixty respondents participated in the survey (Female, n=37; Male, n=18 and No Response, n=5) with country representation illustrated in Figure 1.

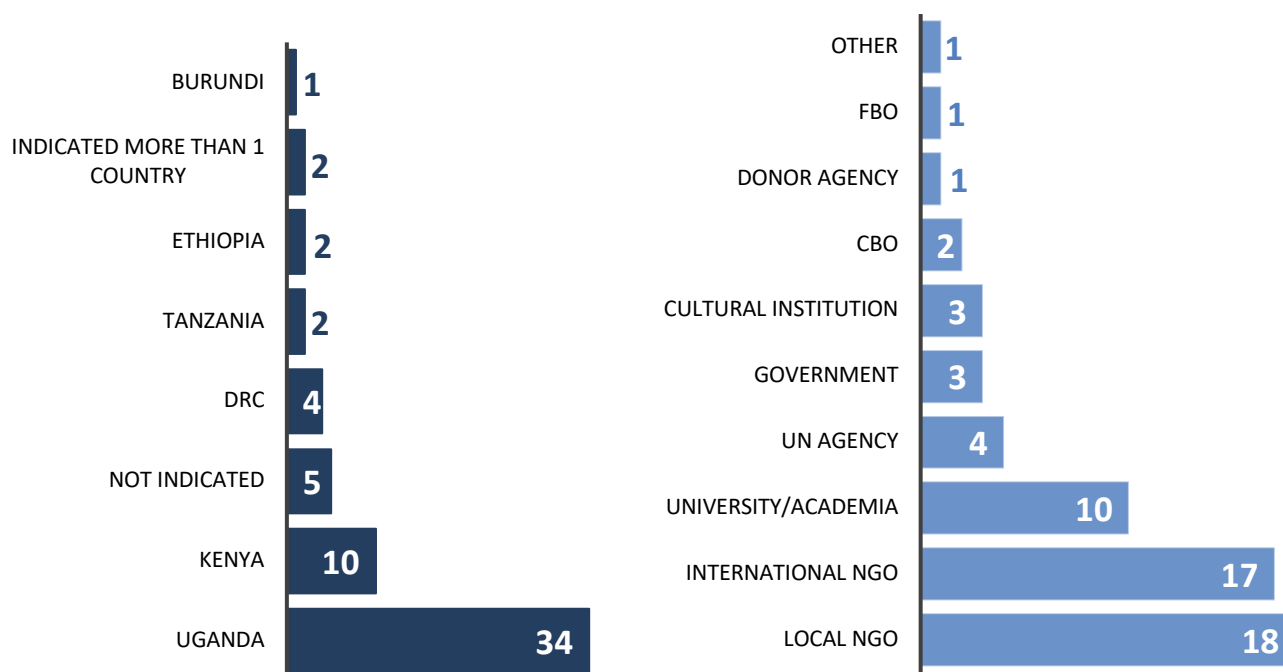
In terms of type of organisations represented, the majority of the respondents work for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (n=18), International NGOs (INGOs) (n=17) and Academia (n=10), as seen in Figure 1. The six qualitative interviews were conducted with participants from Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Ethiopia and Tanzania.



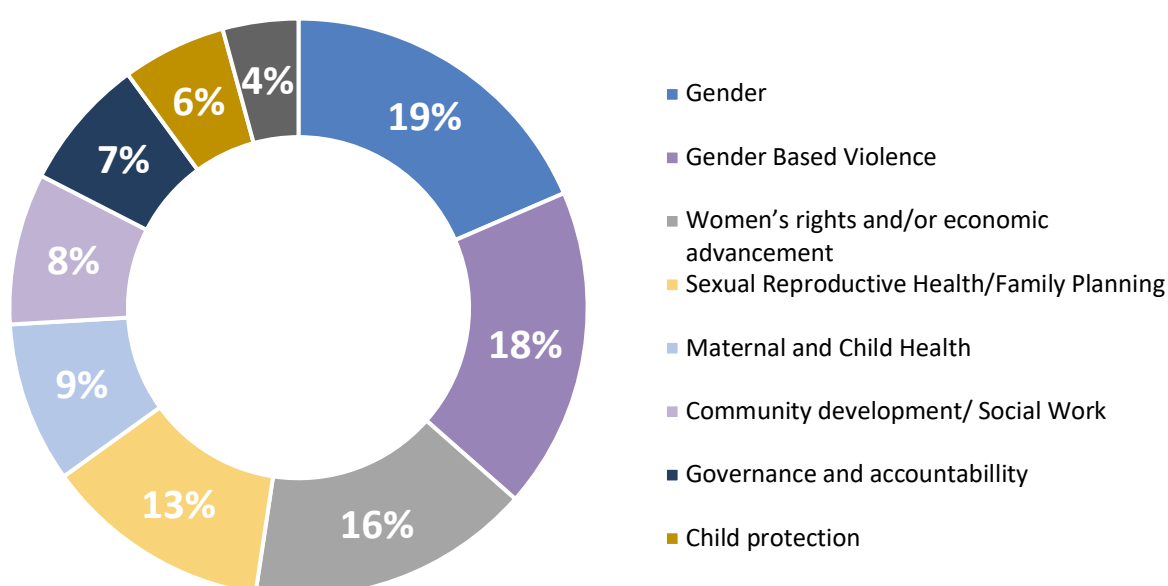
The largest thematic focus of respondents' work included Gender and Gender Based Violence (GBV) (19 percent, n=35); Women's Rights (18 percent, n=34) and Economic Advancement (16 percent,

n= 30) (see Figure 2). Other areas of work include Nutrition, Politics, Early Childhood Development, Primary Education, Secondary Education, Tertiary Education, Environment and Culture.

**Figure 1:** Number of survey respondents by country and organisation they work with (N)



**Figure 2:** Respondents' thematic areas of work focus (%)



## Our Methods

The baseline team started out by identifying organisations and practitioners in the region engaging in social and gender norms work either as implementers, researchers, policy makers, advocates, evaluators or funders. Additionally, a snowball approach was used to open the survey to more participants by sharing the survey link and the EALC Secretariat's contact details throughout the participants' networks. Key Informants (KIs) were identified among institutions with a role in social and gender norms practice. A majority of the KIs held oversight/leadership roles in programming or funding social and gender norms work.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent restrictions and having baseline participants spread across different countries, data collection was largely done remotely. Zoom and phone calls were held with KIs using a KI interview guide. Quantitative data was digitally collected using Kobo Collect app, in which the survey link was shared with respondents.

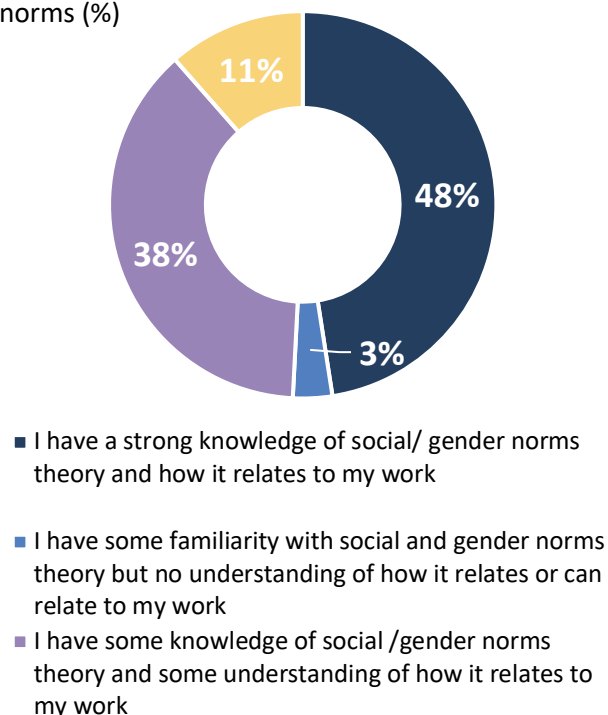
## What We Learned

### Knowledge of social and gender norms

We wanted to learn about respondents' knowledge of social and gender norms and how it relates to their work. **In the survey, about half of the respondents (48 percent, N=29) indicated having strong knowledge of social and gender norms theory and how it relates to their work**, 38 percent (N=23) reported having some knowledge of social and gender norms theory and how it relates to their work, and three percent reported having some familiarity with social and gender norms, but no understanding of how it relates or can relate to their work (Figure 3).

During interviews, respondents exhibited a sound understanding of how social and gender norms might influence their work; however, they **acknowledged gaps at individual and institutional levels**. Some KIs were very confident, reporting good understanding because of their previous research and clear frameworks guiding program design, implementation and assessment. One Female KI noted, *"...we understand social and gender norms, we have conducted so many studies, we have developed different frameworks that we are aligning to when we develop our programs"*.

**Figure 3:** Knowledge on social and gender norms (%)



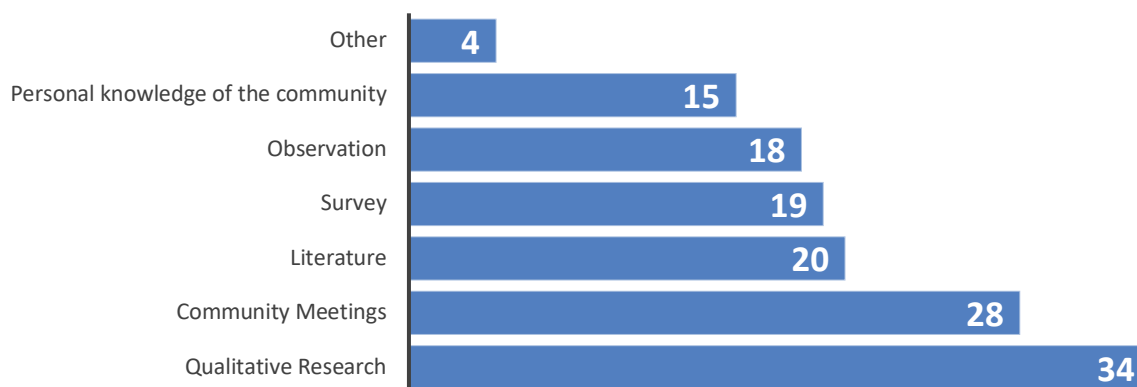
### Work on social and gender norms

The baseline assessment reveals that **a number of organisations represented in the survey had conducted work to understand how and/or which social and gender norms might influence the particular issues they work on or are important to their programs** twelve months prior to the survey. 85 percent (N=51) of respondents reported that they had implemented this work. Respondents reported qualitative research, community meetings, literature reviews, observations and personal knowledge as illustrated in Figure 4.

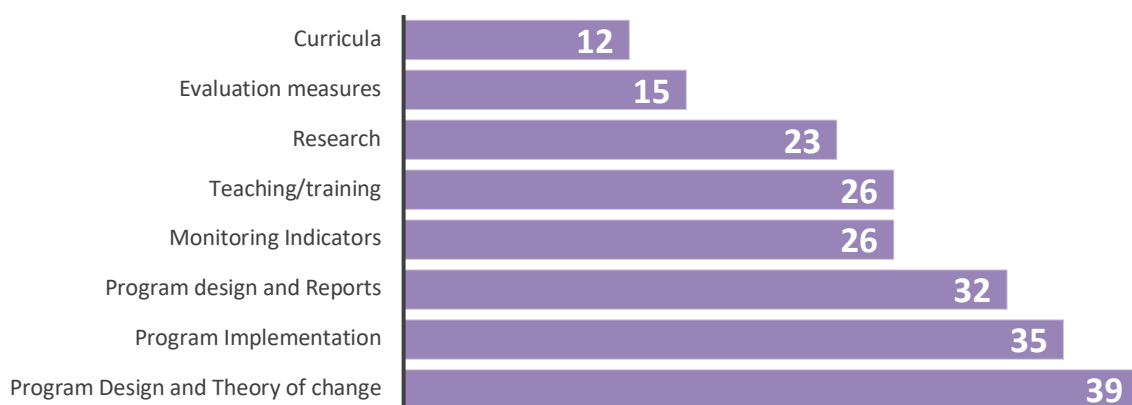
Findings from the KIs are largely in line with the quantitative findings. There is a **strong focus on research, undertaking gender analysis and observations during program/project implementation as a way of understanding and integrating social and gender norms**.

Organisations make an effort to engage communities to better understand social and gender norms, contributing to better programming and resource mobilization to challenge social and gender norms that contribute to inequalities. This is confirmed by the 97 percent of respondents (n=58) who reported incorporating social and gender norms perspectives into their work, primarily through program design and theory of change, implementation modalities and reporting.

**Figure 4:** How social and gender norms were identified (N)



**Figure 5:** Aspects of work where social and gender norms perspectives are incorporated (N)



### Challenges of integrating social and gender norms

Respondents were asked to identify the top three challenges they face integrating social and gender norms approaches in their organisations (Figure 6). **Lack of funding, measurement challenges and lack of resources such as guidance materials and manuals were identified as the most prominent challenges of integrating social and gender norm approaches into their work.**

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*“The challenge we face is that it is really hard to access women to attend meetings due to their gender roles. Men are also reluctant to attend our meetings” Male KI*

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*“...when addressing social and gender norms it has been proved by different researchers that short term funding is really an obstacle because it is almost impossible. What you can do is raise awareness in a one-year project but you cannot deeply address social and gender norms because it requires long term funding” Female KI*

KIs were also asked about challenges and obstacles of delving further into and implementing social and gender norms approaches. **The key challenges they identified fall into three areas: Community, Institutional and Funding.**



## Community

- Difficulties engaging women in community activities due to the constraining nature of their gender roles.
- Men reluctant to actively participate in community engagements that challenge social norms.
- Mindset and behavioral change takes time.



## Institutional

- Limited staff capacities.
- Gender not mainstreamed in programming.
- Lack of frameworks to inform design and implementation of norms-shifting interventions.



## Funding

- Short term funding cycles within which it is difficult to achieve results.
- Lack of funding for social norms work.
- Restrictive funding/donor-driven priorities.

The **fundors** of the respondents' work include:



## Primary Funders

- USAID
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Department for International Development- DFID (now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office)
- Centres for Disease Control (CDC)
- National Governments
- NORAD
- SIDA
- Grand challenge Canada
- Global Affairs Canada
- European Commission
- UN Agencies
- Democratic Governance Facility (DGF)
- Irish AID
- Helwett Foundation
- Master Card Foundation
- Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Global Fund for Women
- Oak Foundation
- KOICA



## Funders

- AWO International
- Huairou Commission
- Canadian Feed the Children
- Norway
- UN CERF
- Disability Rights Fund
- Treatment Action Group (DHf)
- Danskhandicap forbund (DHf)
- Nerve Network and ADD International
- Wellspring Philanthropic Trust
- CIFF
- Johnson and Johnson
- CARE Austria
- BMZ
- WE EFFECT
- Open Society Foundation

**Figure 6: Challenges in integrating social and gender norms (N)**



### Approaches to research, monitoring and evaluation

Overall, the KIs reported that their organisations have Theories of Change and monitoring and evaluation teams that lead measurement and research of social and gender norms work. They also reported efforts to build staff and partner

**capacity.** One female KI reflected, “...we have the M&E unit responsible for building the capacity of partner organizations in M&E but also building the capacity of community volunteers”.

However, gaps were reported in finding ‘experts’ who understand measurement of social and gender norms with experience working with communities (hands on experience), especially

among consulting teams. Additionally, conceptualization and methodology challenges were reported in measurement of some indicators such as unpaid care work and poverty and gender, limiting comparisons. Some KIs alluded to difficulties measuring program impact, as one KI asserted, “It is sometimes difficult to measure the impact in the community to establish whether the intervention has helped them/ created change”.

Moreover, most (n=36) survey respondents noted that availability of monitoring and evaluation tools to measure social and gender norms change is critical to integrating social and gender norms approaches into their programs.



## Approaches to integrate social and gender norms

Qualitative findings reveal the following approaches used to address social and gender norms:

1. Behavioral change approaches
2. Household engagement
3. Community activism
4. Male engagement
5. Partnerships with local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), cultural institutions, academia and government

Overall, targeted approaches are used depending on the nature of programming and desired results.

**Survey respondents' top recommendations to help organisations more easily integrate social and gender norms approaches in their activities are: 1) developing monitoring and evaluation tools to assess social and gender norm change; and 2) longer term funding designated for social and gender norms activities (Table 1).**

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*“We have been using the behavioral change approach to solve the problem of HIV/AIDS by focusing on exploring lives and reflecting on cultural practices shaped by gender that put women and girls at the risk of contracting HIV.” - Male KI*

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*“...partner with local civil society for sustainability, engage with public authorities to make sure that demand and supply actors are also involved in understanding social and gender norms and jointly work together to address them.” Female KI*

**Table 1:** How to integrate social and gender norms approaches<sup>1</sup>

To easily integrate social/gender norms approaches, there should be:	# of respondents
1. Monitoring and evaluation tools to help in measuring social/gender norm change	36
2. Funding designated for social/gender norms activities	32
3. Training on social/gender norms	21
4. Greater interest and support from organisation management	19
5. Stronger understanding of how interventions are enforced and/or how they can shift	18
6. Guidance materials, manuals and other resources on social/gender norms	17
7. Stronger understanding of what social/gender norms are	16
8. Staff who can take the lead on social/gender norms	16
9. More flexibility in adding new activities to an existing program	9
10. More time to invest in this aspect of the program	7

<sup>1</sup> Ranking here means presented in order of number of respondents that identified the solution—not necessarily importance.

**Table 2:** Organisations that respondents worked with in various contexts in the last 12 months

Organisation/Aspect	#	%
<b>a. Promoted the work of the respondent's organisation</b>		
Donor/Development partner	34	30
Academia	20	18
CSOs	28	25
National Government	16	14
Religious and (or) Cultural Institution	11	10
None/Not Applicable	3	3
<b>b. Shared resources, presentations or other informal outputs</b>		
Donor/Development partner	32	28
Academia	19	16
CSOs	27	23
National Government	18	16
Religious and (or) Cultural Institution	11	9
None/Not Applicable	9	8
<b>c. Reviewed or provided feedback to presentations, proposals, papers, reports, working papers etc.</b>		
Donor/Development partner	27	28
Academia	13	14
CSOs	24	25
National Government	14	15
Religious and (or) Cultural Institution	7	7
None/Not Applicable	11	11
<b>d. Trained on gender or social and gender norms</b>		
Donor/Development partner	6	9
Academia	5	7
CSOs	26	37
National Government	11	16
Religious and (or) Cultural Institution	5	7
None/Not Applicable	17	24

<b>e. Received training from on gender or social and gender norms</b>		
Donor/Development partner	14	26
Academia	4	8
CSOs	7	13
National Government	2	4
Religious and (or) Cultural Institution	1	2
None/Not Applicable	25	47
<b>f. Worked with on papers, abstracts, reports or blog posts</b>		
Donor/Development partner	23	32
Academia	12	16
CSOs	17	23
National Government	4	5
Religious and (or) Cultural Institution	3	4
None/Not Applicable	14	19
<b>g. Collaborated with on any grant proposals</b>		
Donor/Development partner	21	27
Academia	17	22
CSOs	17	22
National Government	6	8
Religious and (or) Cultural Institution	2	3
None/Not Applicable	14	18
<b>h. Done any work with on a project or study</b>		
Donor/Development partner	21	27
Academia	17	22
CSOs	18	23
National Government	6	8
Religious and (or) Cultural Institution	2	3
None/Not Applicable	14	18



## Interactions with other organisations working on social and gender norms

The baseline assessment explored interactions among organisations, from formal to informal work relationships, to assess the level of collaboration on social and gender norms. The questions focused on specific areas of collaboration such as funding, training, implementing projects, and sharing information during the last twelve months prior to the survey (Table 2).

## Contribution toward changing social and gender norms

The baseline results show that **80 percent of respondents felt their work was changing social and gender norms** while the remainder was unsure. Respondents who felt their work was changing social and gender norms provided the following explanations:

- Better appreciation of male norms around masculinity, parenting and how to design interventions to involve fathers in parenting programs
- Gender integration in NGO and CSO interventions
- Change in attitudes toward gender roles in the communities
- Women taking on leadership roles
- Reduction in violence against women and children
- Increased respect to sexual rights of girls and women with disabilities within their communities
- Influencing policy and legal frameworks

## Effect of COVID-19 on social and gender norms

The baseline assessment was carried out between August and December 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic had spread across the globe. Reports of the devastating impacts of COVID-19, particularly on women and girls, were daunting. Thus, the survey team sought to understand the effect of the pandemic on respondents' work. **75 percent of the respondents reported that COVID-19 had affected their work**, 17 percent were not sure, and 7 percent reported that it had not affected their work. Respondents observed the following issues:

- Increased vulnerabilities and inequalities faced by women.
- Reduced community engagement and outreach activities.
- Some donor agencies and organisations halted business.
- More incidences of GBV and transactional sex reported.
- Diversion of funding to COVID-19 activities.

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*“A lot has changed since we started engaging men and boys however during COVID we are seeing an increase in GBV which had reduced...”*  
Male KI

## Key Findings and Recommendations



### Summary of Study Findings

- 19 percent (n=35) of respondents reported that they were working on Gender and Gender Based Violence (GBV); 18% (n=34) on Women's Rights and 16% (n= 30) on the Economic Advancement of Women.
- About half (48%, n=29) indicated strong knowledge of social and gender norms theory and how it relates to their work.
- Ninety-seven percent (n=55) reported incorporating social and gender norms perspectives into their work.
- Lack of funding and the difficulty measuring social and gender norms were cited as the most prominent challenges in addressing social and gender norms.
- Training on social and gender norms was the least frequently cited support received by organizations during the year prior to the survey.

The baseline findings reveal that less than half of the survey respondents reported strong knowledge of social and gender norms. This is likely related to the lack of capacity strengthening reported. These results suggest that the EALC's work to build a learning network of practitioners working on social and gender norms is timely.

Qualitative research and community meetings are the most common ways organisations learn how and which social and gender norms influence their work. This points to gaps in rigorous research and interrogation of gender and social norms practice and limited opportunities for sharing amongst researchers, evaluators, practitioners and policy change advocates. In terms of knowledge utilization, most organisations surveyed incorporate social and gender norms into program design, theory of change, implementation and reporting, which points to a high potential for utilizing useful learnings in social and gender norms practice.

Lack of funding and challenges in measurement of social and gender norms are the primary challenges documented in the study. Concerns around norm change and impact measurement noted by respondents could explain why 20 percent of respondents were unsure whether their work was contributing to shifting norms.

Most respondents had their work affected by the pandemic. This has been seen through diversion of donor funds to respond to COVID-19 related issues; drastically changing priorities; increasing vulnerabilities and inequalities, especially for women and girls; and increased GBV cases.

From the baseline results, it is clear that building bridges to share knowledge and learning, including resources and tools, along with developing new resources and strengthening measurement and research will be key to boosting on-going but disparate implementation of social and gender norms transformation initiatives. Targeted and sustained funding beyond short-term pilots will be critical to advance this crucial area of work, especially for sustained progress addressing sticky gender and social norms that contribute to inequality, exclusion and disadvantage to be achieved.

Therefore, key recommendations are:

- ✓ The EALC should strengthen collaboration amongst partners, researchers, evaluators and policy makers to improve sharing and learning.
- ✓ The EALC should institute capacity building events and training on gender and social norms for programming, measurement and policy and advocacy.
- ✓ Funders should earmark sustained funding for these initiatives as gender and social norms change is a long-term endeavor that requires sustained financial support and resourcing.
- ✓ The EALC together with the Global Learning Collaborative should invest in developing tools and sharing and strengthening measurement as this is a critical element in ensuring progress on social and gender norms practice.

