

SOCIAL NORMS EXPLORATION

Using participatory action research to identify and diagnose social norms and take action within programs

July 6, 2021



Zoom Reminders



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Overview of Orientation

Assessing norms, using the SNET

Social Norms: What They Are & Why They Matter



Introduction to Norms Assessments: What & Why



Overview of the Social Norms Exploration Tool (SNET)



Expert Panel on SNET Experiences & Lessons Learned



Discussion and Questions

What are social norms?

Why do they matter?

DEFINITION

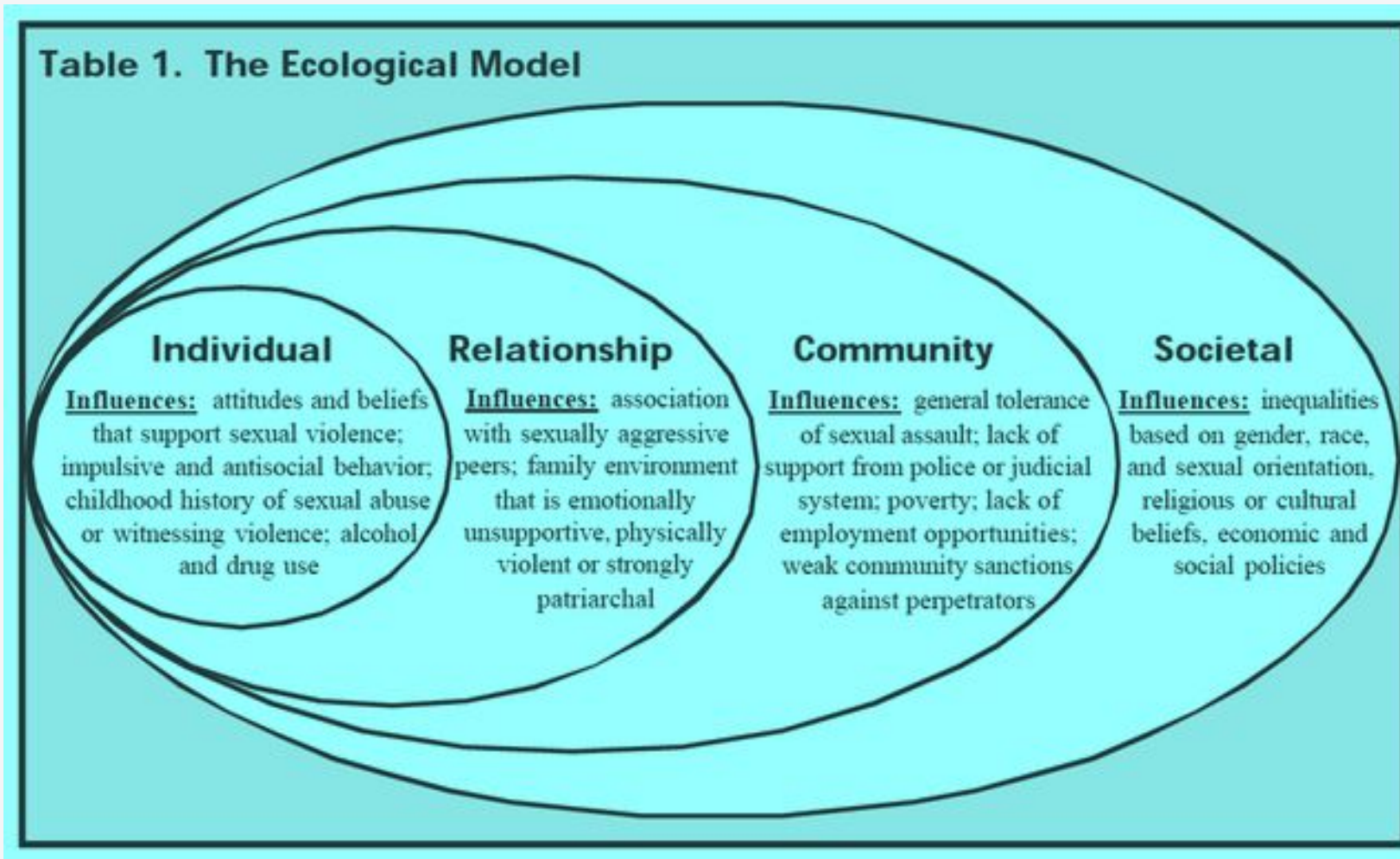
Social Norms

Social norms are the often **implicit, informal rules** that most people accept and abide by. They are influenced by **belief systems**, perceptions of **what others expect and do**, and sometimes by perceived **rewards and sanctions**

Norms are embedded in **formal and informal institutions** and produced and reproduced through **social interaction**.

- ALIGN, Overseas Development Institute

Social norms permeate all levels of society and societal structures





Gender norms are social norms of masculinity or femininity that express the expected behavior of people of a particular gender, and often age, in a given social context. They often reflect and cement inequitable gender relations.

- *ALIGN, Overseas Development Institute*

TERM		DEFINITION
Behavior		What I do
Attitude & Belief		What I prefer / what I know
Social Norm	Descriptive Norm	What I think others do
	Injunctive Norm	What I think others will approve/disapprove of me doing
	Gender Norm	Expectations for how individuals should behave based on their gender identity
Reference Group		<p>People whose opinions matter to me (for A particular behavior or context)</p> <p>People who reward or sanction me for my behavior</p>

EXAMPLES

Norms, attitudes, behaviors, and sanctions

- I don't necessarily like using violence (**attitude**), but many other people spank or slap their children (**descriptive norm**). And if I don't use violence (**behavior**), other parents (**reference group**) will ridicule me (**sanction**) for not properly controlling my children.
- I am waiting to have sex before marriage (**behavior**). My family (**reference group**) wouldn't approve if I engaged in premarital sex (**injunctive norm**) and I know everyone else in my community (**reference group**) waits to have sex until marriage, too (**descriptive norm**).
- I would like to report that husband who beats his wife (**attitude**), but everyone (**reference group**) beats up their wife every now and again (**descriptive norm**).

WHY SOCIAL NORMS MATTER

Why should we
examine or address
social norms?

An increased focus on social norms can help improve development impact

by...



Creating an environment that sustains and spreads behavior change over time



Addressing norms that drive multiple behaviors



Providing a common avenue of collaboration for projects across sectors/divisions

ACTIVITY & DISCUSSION

Addressing norms...in addition to knowledge and attitudes

Knowledge: Adam knows that breastfeeding protects the health of infants because it is full of nutrients that help children grow.

Attitude: Adam thinks that it would be good for his wife to breastfeed their child.

Descriptive norm (what is perceived to be typical): Adam thinks that none of his friends' wives breastfeed their children.

Injunctive norm (what is expected and enforced by others): Adam thinks that his mother would be very angry with him if she found out his wife breastfeeds their child.



**How do we assess
if norms are present?**

DEFINITION

What is a norms assessment?

Norms assessments are activities used to rapidly determine the most relevant social norms affecting the behavior(s) of interest in a specific setting to inform a program of action to guide: (A) program design, (B) implementation strategies, as well as (C) monitoring and evaluation, across the project lifecycle.

THROUGH A NORMS ASSESSMENT, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER:

Questions	What do you want to know from a program perspective?
1. Who are the reference groups that influence the behavior(s)?	Identifying reference groups that do or do not support a behavior help programs include the right people in interventions and evaluations.
2. What are the social norms that influence the behavior(s)?	Identifying the root causes of an issue – including social norms - ensures your program articulates and addresses the range of determinants of behaviors.
3. Why do people comply with social norms? Why not?	Identifying reasons why people comply will help unpack the ‘black box’ in your program. (Maybe it’s because norms are hidden, or people have a strong desire to conform, or they gain social benefits for conforming or fear sanctions for not conforming.)
4. What are the most influential social norms ?	Discussing, analyzing, and prioritizing normative factors (and taking into account other factors) allows more strategic use of resources for social and behavior change.

OPTIONS FOR ASSESSING NORMS

TYPE	OPTIONS	HOW, WHY, WHEN?
<i>Secondary data collection</i>	Review existing literature and data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful if you don't have resources for data collection • May provide evidence regarding whether and how norms are sustaining a given behavior (if norms are explicitly explored)
<i>Primary data collection</i>	Conduct traditional interviews or focus-group discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be in the form of adding norms-specific questions to existing guides to gather participant information or part of planned research • May be done before or if you have limited information
	Vignettes <i>(qualitative open-ended stories)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide fictional contextually-driven situations for participants to react to to uncover underlying root causes of behaviors • Best done if you have some information on norms
	Conduct participatory exercises and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage participants in identifying why behavioral problems exist, including normative drivers of behaviors • Best done if you have some information on norms

Don't formative assessments already address norms?

- Assessments are often focused on behavior change and may ignore norms.
- Formative assessments may explore norms but not unpack them enough to take action.
- Program staff may assume they know what are the critical norms but their assumptions may or may not be correct.

Overview of the SNET

What is the Social Norms Exploration Tool?



- A participatory, learning and action tool that guides a rapid “social norm exploration”
- Allows for rapid identification of reference groups and social norms influencing behaviors
- Offers guidance on how to use the information in program design, strategy adjustment, and evaluation

Available online at: <https://irh.org/social-norms-exploration/>

Who, how, and when to use the SNET?

- **Who it is for:** Project planners and implementers, especially focused on community-based programming
- **What it includes:** Working definitions of social norms + guidance, templates, and tools to implement a social norm exploration
- **When it is used:** Easily integrated into different phases of new or existing programs – though ideally early in project lifestyle

SNET Approach

Learning through participation



A variety of participatory and visual methods in interview and group discussion formats for learning about and engaging with communities.



Enables the sharing of insights with analysis providing a catalyst for the community to act on what is uncovered within a setting.



Provides the basis of the SNET from start to finish and builds capacity in staff as a result.



Why use participatory approaches to assess norms?

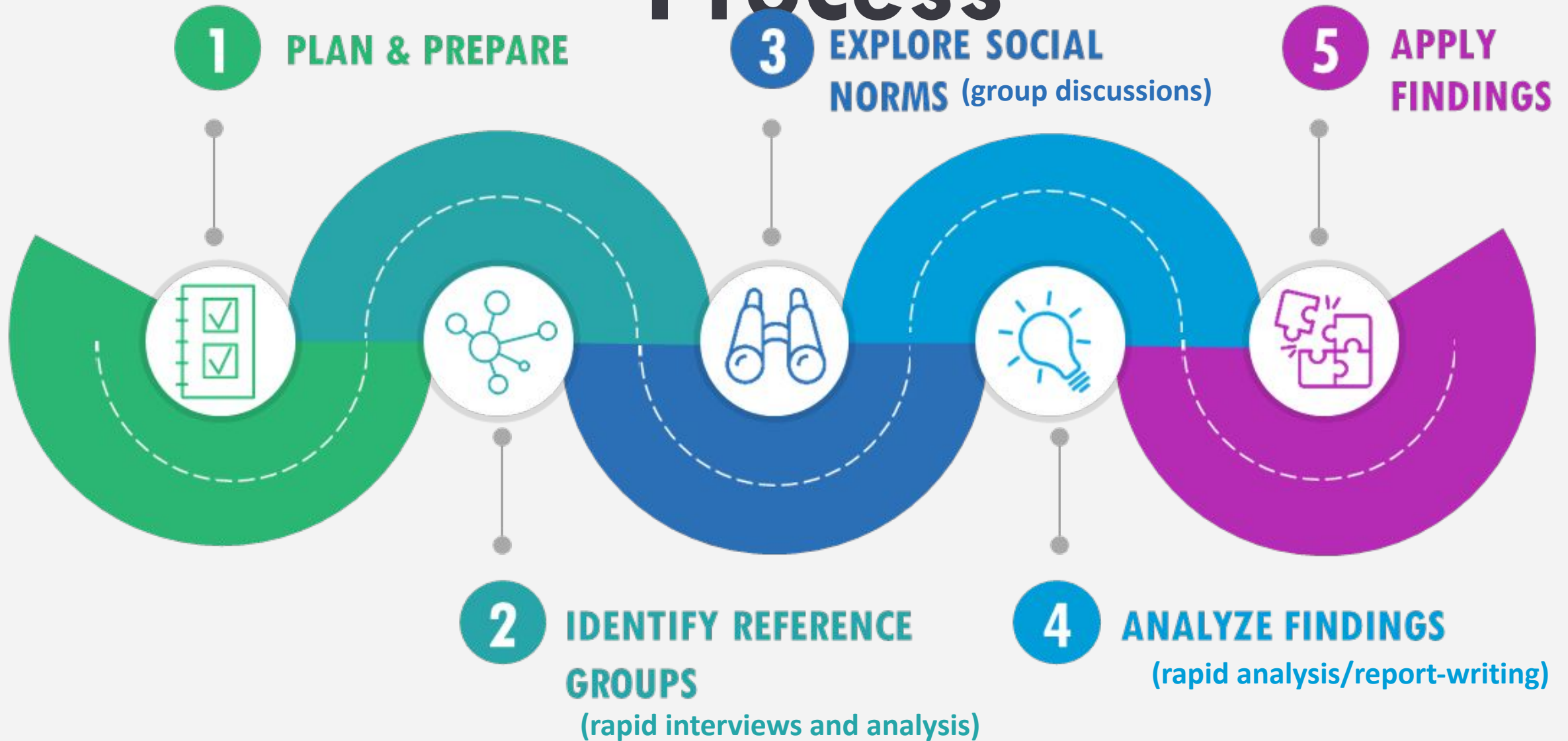
- Can improve the effectiveness of qualitative methods such as FGD and IDI
- Offer a direct, less biased means to learn about social norms from community members
- Participatory methods are also enjoyable, easy for participants to understand, and allow their greater ownership of the assessment process.

WHAT'S THE SNET?

What is the SNET
process?

Social Norms Exploration

Process



Phase 1 – Plan & Prepare

ACTIVITIES

WHO

TIME

- | | | | |
|----|--|---|----------|
| 1. | Use social norms lens to develop new understanding of your project (Problem Tree Analysis) | Core team-
responsible for
leading process | Two days |
| 2. | Decide on population segmentation | | |
| 3. | Define the SNE aim and objectives | Field team-
responsible for
gathering information | |
| 4. | Choose exercises to identify social norms in your population <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Five Whys• Problem Tree Analysis• Vignettes | | |
| 5. | Determine which and how many communities and individuals to engage | | |
| 6. | Prepare a plan and organize logistics for field work | | |

Phase 2 – Identity Reference Groups

ACTIVITIES

WHO

TIME

- | | | | |
|----|---|--|----------|
| 1. | Adapt ‘My Social Networks’ exercise to behavior and populations of interest <ul style="list-style-type: none">Learn which people are influential and provide guidance, advice, or support on a specific issue related to the behavior of interest | Core team – responsible for overall activity

Field team – | Two days |
| 2. | Create an interview guide | conducts rapid | |
| 3. | Plan and prepare for field activities | interviews | |
| 4. | Conduct speed interviews – provide data to core team | | |
| 5. | Rapidly analyze the information to identify key reference groups | | |
| 6. | Review results with the field team | | |

Phase 3 – Explore Social Norms

ACTIVITIES	WHO	TIME
1. Adapt selected exercise (Five Whys, Problem Tree, or Vignettes) to your behavior(s), population of interest, and reference groups	Core team- responsible for overall activity	Three days
2. Plan and prepare for field activities, including invitations to people to join group discussions	Field team- Conducts social norms	
3. Conduct group discussions with groups from key population of interest and their reference groups	exploration exercises	

Phase 4 – Analyze Findings

ACTIVITIES

WHO

TIME

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Complete a participatory rapid analysis for each behavior of interest | Field and Core teams involved in conducting social norms exploration | Depends on the the number of behaviors covered; about 1 day/behavior |
| 2. Putting it all together in a "results brief" | | |

Phase 5 – Apply Findings

ACTIVITIES

WHO

TIME

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Re-examine program components using social norms perspective | Staff and non-project stakeholders: program managers, M&E staff, team members knowledgeable of social norms as they relate to interest groups behaviors | Half-day to reflect, consider that changes may take longer to put into effect |
| 2. Use findings to propose program adjustments | | |

Expert Panel

Our Panelists



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Discussion & Questions



ACTIVITY

Your experience with formative assessments

- What formative assessments have you done in your behavior change programs?
- At what point of your programs have you done it?
- Have your programs explored norms in depth?
- Are there any other gaps you have encountered in your work to assess norms?