



UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S  
HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON  
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

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# NORMS AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

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## ***Executive Summary***

### **1. Introduction**

As the United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment seeks to improve women's access to decent work and realisation of their economic rights, action on gendered norms must form an integral part of this agenda. Transforming gendered norms, though challenging, is possible and effective, with women's organisations playing a central role in identifying strategies and solutions.

### **2. Gender bias in the economy and society**

Today's economy is stacked against women. Modern day economic policy and practice and economic norms often fails to recognise or value the full spectrum of work that is necessary for development, human progress and economic growth. For example, unpaid care work of children and the elderly is not counted in economic valuation of 'work' and deemed of low value compared to the production of goods and services in the market. Similarly, watering plants, weeding or cleaning equipment on farms, is not seen as 'real' work against planting and harvesting. This work, so often undertaken by women, is not only invisible and unrecognised but often also impedes women's choices around and access to quality work in the formal market.

Gendered norms about roles in the economy also act as a negative force restricting women's access to and choice over employment. Such gendered norms determine what roles are most appropriate for women, whether women are eligible for senior positions, and whether women should work outside the home. These gendered norms are rooted in broader norms relating to gender inequality that, for example, fuel violence against women.

### **3. Why look at social norms as part of women's economic empowerment?**

Women's access to economic opportunities is regulated in part by gendered norms. Gendered norms shape the behaviours, values and aspirations of individuals, families, groups, societies and institutions. Specifically, norms underpin all aspects of women's economic empowerment, including structuring the economy itself in what is valued as productive labour and what is overlooked (for example care work). Norms also structure the economy in regards to the normative assumptions underpinning macro-economic policy, but also the kinds of roles women take on within the economy leading to occupational segregation.

Moreover, norms regulate not only decision-making abilities and bargaining power, but also individual perceptions and behaviours. Beyond the individual, norms also structure and regulate group and institutional /organisation norms such as legislative frameworks, rules and guidelines.

Norms can also have a positive effect. Policy makers and practitioners can overlook the positive effect of norms as policy focus is often directed towards minimising the insidious gendered norms that hinder women's economic empowerment. Emphasising positive norms affecting both genders can, however, be promoted as a way to counter such negative norms.

#### **4. Action on gendered norms**

Transforming gendered norms, though challenging, is possible and effective and must form an integral part of a comprehensive approach to women's economic empowerment. This requires increasing the level of investment in norm change, with women's organisations playing a central role in identifying strategies and solutions.

Specifically, norm change leading to women's economic empowerment does depend on which norms are targeted for change and why, meaning it is impossible to find one silver bullet to norm change. Moreover, because gendered norms are maintained by various structures and processes and intersect with other norms, any intervention should not be conducted in isolation. Rather, interventions on gendered norms need to be related to the broader goals around the reduction of poverty and inequality. Specifically, gendered norm change could be grounded in the following aspects of economic empowerment: access to resources and assets; economic security; collective agency and increasing choice and decision-making ability.

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## ***1. Introduction***

This paper sets out a discussion regarding social norms and women's economic empowerment for the United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.

Women's economic empowerment can be defined in various ways, but the common elements found in the literature include expanding economic opportunities, the realisation of rights and assets and the exercise of power over economic decisions<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, the United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Panel defines women's economic empowerment as "to succeed and advance economically and to make and act on economic decisions" (HLP 2016: 1).

The role of social norms that underpin women's economic empowerment is a growing area of interest (Connell and Pearse 2014; Marcus and Harper 2014; Sen 2007; Argwal 1997; Mackie et al. 2015; Hughes 2016). In research and policy, social norms are highlighted as insidious barriers against women's full economic empowerment, although it is also noted that norms can be enablers for the achievement of economic empowerment. This paper aims to review current literature on social norms and their relationship with women's economic empowerment to inform forthcoming development research, policy and practise.

## ***2. Gendered norms***

There are various ways to conceptualise norms. At a very rudimentary level, however, we can understand norms as the rules that direct, shape or regulate practice, beliefs and institutions. Norms can be general ideals, beliefs and preferences held by a population or individual and hence operate at differing levels. They can be both conscious and sub-conscious. Norms can effect emotions (Elster 1989) and regulate feelings of internal obligation (Alexander 2003) as well as social expectations and values (Bicchieri 2006). Social norms are also linked with gendered relations of the family, kinship and community but further reinforced through norms of states and the market (Kabeer 2012; Whitehead 1979; Waring 1999).

Norms can regulate the common day-to-day practice of a particular group of people, or can be aspirational for that group (Connell and Pearse 2014). What is, however, most common and what is aspired to are not necessarily the same. An example is the commonly held norm that women raise children. This could come into conflict with

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<sup>1</sup> In a report titled 'Innovative approaches to promoting women's economic empowerment', the UNDP (UNDP 2008) defined women's economic empowerment as being "achieved by targeting initiatives to

norms that are aspired to: in this case, the norm that both men and women are equal contributors to the raising of children. Therefore, norms are non-binary, being both descriptive (what people actually do) and injunctive (what people ought to do) (Hughes 2016).

Relevant to this paper are specifically *gendered norms*, which provide particular roles and rules within which women and men act, value and aspire. In the case of gendered norms, Marcus and Harper (2014) argue that gendered roles and the broadly accepted divisions of men and women's responsibility are generally descriptive norms, and injunctive norms corresponding to gendered ideologies and stereotypes. Stereotypes are adverse norms; having caricature-like properties that become, "vehicles for norms of inequality - for instance, for a persistent devaluing of women, a celebration of masculine bodily power, or a belief that women and men should be confined to narrow and segregated social roles" (Connell and Pearse 2014: 9).

Whilst related, norms are different to attitudes and behaviour, where attitudes are how people judge a certain thing or behaviour, and behaviour is what people do (Mackie et al. 2015; Hughes 2016). A person's reference group (local, institutional and societal level<sup>2</sup>) have normative properties that influence that person's attitudes and behaviour. For example, colleagues at an employee's workplace may make normative statements about how inefficient the government's trade policy is, which may affect that employee's attitude towards the government. Moreover, these normative assessments may even affect the employee's behaviour; and how she votes for the government at the next election.

Norms are also relations of power, held in place by institutions and structures. Specifically, "Norms are vital determinants of social stratification as they reflect and reproduce relations that empower some groups of people with material resources, authority, and entitlements while marginalizing and subordinating others by normalizing shame, inequality, indifference or invisibility. It is important to note that these norms reflect and reproduce underlying gendered relations of power, and that is fundamentally what makes them difficult to alter or transform" (Sen 2007: 28). For example, norms that justified girls not needing to be educated carry material consequences in regards to school enrolment, literacy and numeracy and employment capabilities (Sen and Dreze 2002).

Yet social norms are also not static. They are constantly in flux and changing. There are sometimes conscious efforts to contest them, for example, advocacy movements to challenge old systems of land tenure that discriminate against women, as in Ethiopia and the Philippines (Daley and Pallas 2014). Even when they are not targeted specifically, however, social norms shift with intersecting social processes and relations of power. For

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<sup>2</sup> Reference groups can be immediate to the individual such as family and friends, and they can be at an institutional level such as schools and work places, as well at a society level, where norms are transferred through media, laws, and broader cultural attributes.

example, migration is a social process that has been documented as having properties that can indirectly change the norms of migrating individuals as well as the norms in receiving countries (deHass 2010; Mahler and Pessar 2006; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). Still the isolation of a particular norm is difficult where one gendered norm usually links into other gendered norms. For example, the gendered norm that women do the majority of unpaid domestic labour relates also to the norms of honourable ways for males to act which may have implications to what others in the community would think if the husband started to do a share of such labour. It also evokes norms of what constitutes work, where domestic household work is considered productive like paid labour found in formal employment. Therefore norms are not in isolation from each other.

Law or international treaties and conventions are normative. For example, the South African constitution calls for the “creation of a non-racial and non-sexist egalitarian society underpinned by human dignity, the rule of law, a democratic ethos, and human rights”. In addition, the Kenyan constitution calls for “the elimination of gender discrimination in law, customs, and practices related to land and property”. Whilst legislative frameworks and tools have important normative functions, however, they do not guarantee adherence or enforcement (Brown 2000; Charlesworth 2000; Douzinas 2000; Betts and Orchard 2014).

It is noted but not further explored here that the whole concept of gendered norms can be restrictive and exclude people who do not define themselves by gender – especially the binary identities of ‘male’ and ‘female’ (Gamson 1995; Brown 2000; Butler 1990).

### ***2.1. Norms and women’s economic empowerment***

Norms both sustain and constrain factors of women’s economic empowerment and their economic opportunities. For example, norms that value women and girls contributions in the public domain can see an increase in girl’s school enrolment and women’s reproductive rights. Differently, norms that undervalue women’s work can hinder their economic empowerment, as in the case of norms that do not value care work at home nor in the formal economy.

Women’s access to economic opportunities and empowerment is regulated in part by social norms. Social norms shape the behaviours, values and aspirations of individuals, families, groups, societies and institutions. Specifically, norms underpin all aspects of women’s economic empowerment, including structuring the economy itself, the roles women play, regulating decision making ability and bargaining power, individual perceptions and agency, and norms underpinning policy and legislation.

#### *2.1.1. The gendered economy*

Norms underpin the economy itself, which can directly limit opportunities for women. We can understand the gendering of the economy in three specific ways; first, what work is normatively defined as productive within the economy and what is not. Second, the gendered implications of normative logics underpinning macroeconomic policies. Third, the gendering of roles and occupations taken up by men and women.



#### 2.1.1.1. Economic norms

There is a gendered division of labour within the economy where gendered norms shape what is classified as productive and reproductive work (Waring 1999). Household productive labour is typically not valued in monetary terms. The norm of “production” should not merely be the production of commodities and services for sale, but also as the production of life (reproduction, child rearing, domestic duties and care work). This distinction further challenges the gendered social norm that production of life and reproduction is “natural” and belongs to the private sphere – a norm that severely undervalues the labour and productivity of women. In addition to the severe undervaluation and under-recognition of all forms of productive work, such invisible work usually falls on women across the world (UN Women 2016), and is often concealed within the economy (Eyben 2012). For example, productive labour associated with care work is rarely incorporated into economic analysis used by decision-makers, who consequently overlook the impact of care costs and other related issues on women’s employment or girls’ education, or rarely invest in care work to support the workforce (Kabeer 2012). Instead, “care is widely believed to be an issue for individual families to figure out, rather than a social good to be supported by wider communities and society at large” (Chopra and Sweetman 2014: 411). Yet Woetzel et al (2015) estimate that women’s unpaid work contributes globally US\$10 trillion per year or 13% of the global GDP.

Norms also regulate how women’s domestic productive work goes largely unpaid. Whilst there are geographic differences, the care of people is considered to have low value as compared to production of commodities, especially marketable commodities. Moreover, norms also regulate the value assigned to the work women do, which is considered to be of low skill and low value. This is due to both how norms value women less than men in many parts societies across the world, and to how labour associated with the care of people is considered low value. The motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium are interesting examples, showing how gendered norms can regard men as more committed to their work when they have a family to provide for and, how women are less committed to their work when they have a family to care for (HLP 2016).

The undervaluing of care work does not mean that women (and men) should be discouraged from care work. Instead, the norms around the value of such important labour need to change. For example, challenging norms that assign certain types of work such as care work to women, as well as harmful notions of masculinity such as that men should be “breadwinners” not “carers”. Thinking about how all forms of productive work can be valued is crucial, although it requires an analysis of the nature of gendered norms, structures and relations within the economy itself (McKay 2007).

#### 2.1.1.2. Macroeconomic Policy

Macroeconomic policies that regulate international and domestic economies are also underpinned by gendered norms (Bacchi 2010; 2004), leading to gender discrimination and economic disempowerment (Hunt and Samman 2016). In the past, policy makers

tend to not take into account the distributional aspects of fiscal policies that normatively embrace austerity logic. Cuts to essential public services like health, social services, education and public sector employment have impacted vulnerable sections of societies. For example, such cuts have impacted women through an increase in working longer hours to meet basic household needs (Hunt and Samman 2016), an increase in care work to fill gaps left by social service cuts (Razavi 2011; Samman et al 2016) and the scaling back of public sector jobs which have a high level of female employees (Hunt and Samman 2016).

Macroeconomic policies can also produce relational poverty and dispossess some groups disproportionately (Mosse 2010), especially women (Waring 1999). Specifically, relational poverty is a persistent “consequence of historically developed economic and political relations, as opposed to ‘residual’ approaches which might regard poverty as the result of being marginal to these same relations” (Mosse, 2010: 1157). For example, scholars have long argued that the informal employment sector exists to support the formal employment sector (Harris-White and Sinha 2007). As a by product of the global economy, the informal sector provides a realm for registered and /or corrupt firms to take advantage of petty production (often cheap and with out access to social protection), evade taxes and avoid environmental regulation. Such seems necessary to service the norm of competition and flexibility within the globalised and increasingly liberalised economy (Standing 2014). Informal labour, especially domestic and migrant labour, falls disproportionately on women (WIEGO 2016; HLP 2016). The ILO estimates that out of the 67 million domestic workers globally, 54 million of them women. Yet, these jobs are some of the least protected under national labour laws, lacking social protection and can be often exploitative and dangerous (Mitra 2005; ILO 2016).

#### 2.1.1.3. Regulation of gendered roles

Norms underpin the roles women and men take on within the economy. Norms underpinning roles for men and women can be seen in both formal and informal labour markets. For example care work generally falls onto the women themselves, where care is seen as ‘women’s work’ and not a role for men. Hunt and Samman (2016) through examining the Gallup data, found that 7 out of 10 respondents agreed that it was easier for women to cope with the demands of work and family matters than men – 6 out of 10 men and close to 8 out of 10 women thought this was the case. This pattern was also reflected in the World Values Survey (WVS) where participants were asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement “When a mother works for pay, the children suffer”. Globally, just under 47% of male and female respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and just over 48% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Yet there is difference between countries and gender. For example, in Algeria, 43.2% of women agreed or strongly agreed, and 51.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Yet 72.5% of women in Thailand strongly agreed or agreed, and only 26.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Beyond care work, norms also underpin many other roles women play in the economy specifically in regards to the types of work women do and the occupations they take on. Figure 1 shows the responses from both men and women to the question ‘On the whole, men make better business executives than women do’. Between men and women from countries that had data, 43.3% either strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. More concerning is how women think of women - where in 16 out of 60 countries with data, over 50% of women said they strongly agreed or agreed with this statement.

**Figure 1**

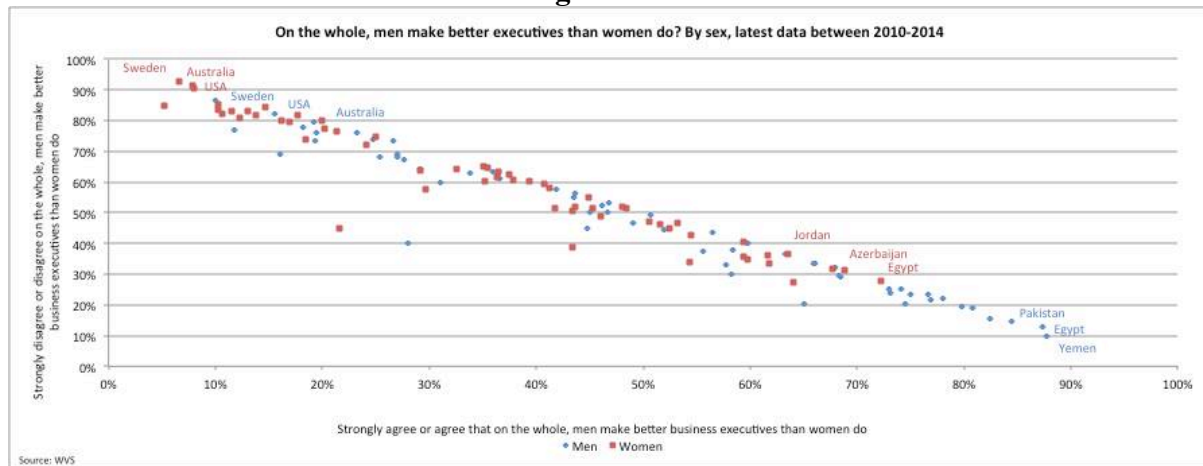
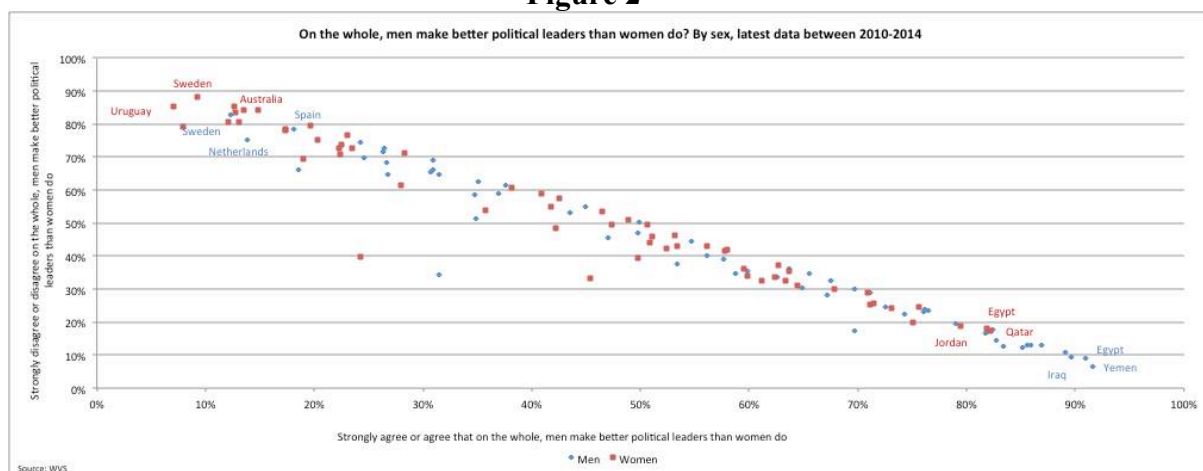


Figure 2 shows a similar pattern when it comes to women in political leadership positions. Also in the World Values Survey, men and women were asked if they believed that men make better political leaders than women do. Table 2 shows that between men and women from countries that had data, 22.2% strongly agreed and 27.0% agreed with this statement. Concerning is how 27 out of 60 countries with data, over 50% of women said they strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Such examples indicate the power of norms that regulate the occupational segregation in the market economy and leadership more generally.

**Figure 2**



Yet in the Afrobarometer survey, 47,941 respondents were asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement; Women should have the same chance of

being elected to political office as men. Only 66% of men and women strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Moreover, only 50% of women agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Interestingly though, when asked if men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women, 32% of men and women strongly agreed or agreed with this statement, where just under 40% of women either agreed or strongly agreed.

**Figure 3**

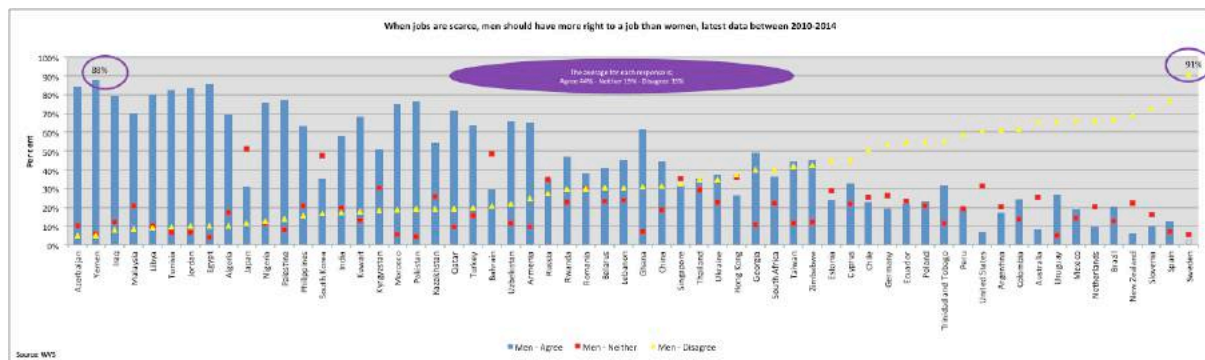
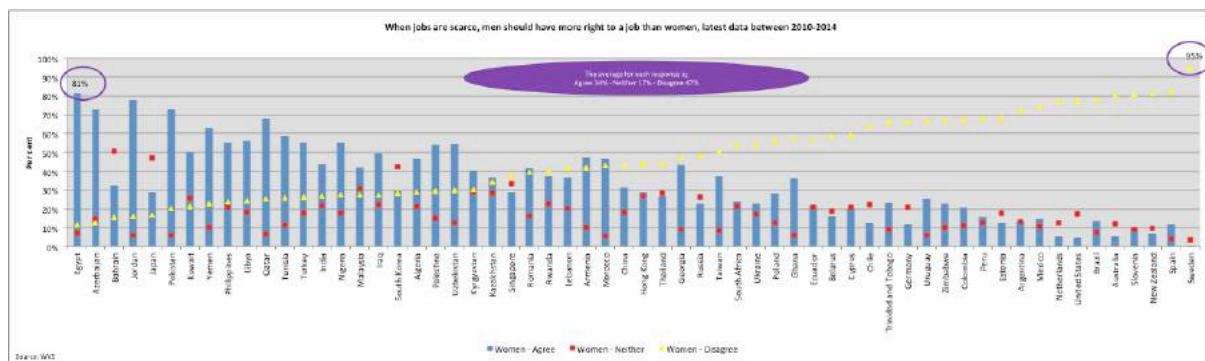


Figure 3 above shows the opinion of men about if they believe that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women. Comparable is Figure 4 below which shows the opinion of women regarding this statement and it shows that compared to men women do agree less than men on this topic and also disagree more than men on this topic nevertheless for our 60 countries with data on average 34% said to agree with it.

**Figure 4**



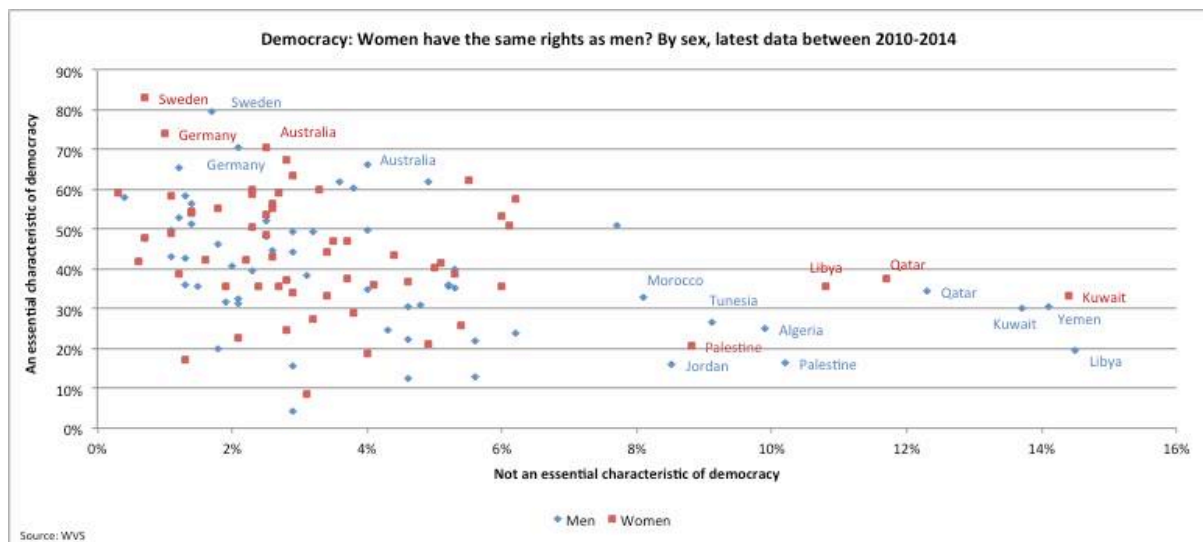
A similar pattern regarding women’s right for the choice of work globally is also found in the Gallup data where Hunt and Samman (2016) found that just over 20% of men and 10% of women disagree with the statement that women “should be allowed to hold any job for which they are qualified outside the home”. Such norms around occupational segregation feeds into the global gender wage gap; where the global average shows 16 percentage points between what men earn and what women earn (HLP 2016). These norms also impact on women and men’s educational choices, which, as discussed in the HLP (2016), also lead to occupational segregation.

### 2.1.2. Norms and social relations

Norms also underpin social relations between men and women; impacting on women's ability to bargain and make decisions. For example, Argwal (1997) finds that gendered norms function in four distinct ways in internal household relations. Firstly, norms set parameters on what can be bargained about; secondly, norms both determine and constrain the bargaining power of women; thirdly, norms affect how bargaining is carried out; and fourthly, norms establish what is to be bargained over (Pearse and Connell 2015).

Related to women's ability to bargain and choose is her relationship with other people – especially her intimate partner and other significant relationships. Figure 5 shows how in all societies, there is a prevailing disagreement in the World Values Survey statement that women having the same rights as men is an essential characteristic of democracy; some countries more than others. Only 41.2% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement globally – 43.7% of men, but concerning is only 38.6% of women agreed.

**Figure 5**



Norms also regulate mobility that men and women have regarding relationships and choice they have around them. In the World Values Survey, still 29.0% of men felt it was never justifiable for divorce, 27.8% of women felt the same. Also related, is the feeling of control some men feel over their wives.

Violent relationships are then clearly important to analyse when thinking about norms and women's economic empowerment. Gender-based violence includes acts that result or are likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women. This includes "threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (Hughes et al 2015: 283). Gender-based violence also includes the reproduction of oppressive power over women to enforce derogatory and damaging gender norms (Hughes et al. 2015; Raab 2012). For example, in the World Values Survey, only 62.6% of men thought it was never justifiable to beat their wives.

Also concerning is how 70.8% of women themselves felt that it was never acceptable for husbands to beat their wives; meaning over a quarter of women felt it could be justifiable.

Moreover, gender-based violence (such as domestic violence) has an insidious and restrictive effect on women's economic empowerment (Hughes et al. 2014; World Bank 2014a). It can physically, socially and psychologically constrain a woman's agency and restrict opportunities for her to become economically empowered. Sexual harassment should also not be overlooked, which can severely humiliate and restrain women's freedom in private, public and work places. Women's economic empowerment is, however, an important remedy to address gender-based violence, not just because it supports financial independence, but also because it brings about sociocultural implications such as collective agency, greater feelings of control for women, and the provision of positive role models (Schuler et al. 1996). As women's economic empowerment increases awareness and promotes changes to gender roles, however, men may respond with a backlash as patriarchal systems are challenged, which may result in further violence against women (Haneef et al 2014). Domestic violence is a way in which men can regain control from economically-empowered women, and this should be viewed as a specific risk to women's economic empowerment.

### *2.1.3. Individual agency*

Norms underpin and regulate individual agency of women, in the kinds of behaviours, attitudes and actions she takes (Mackie et al. 2015; Hughes 2016). Yet, it cannot be assumed that all norms are internalised in the same manner. In classical social sciences, norms are understood as in dialectic with social structures, where norms shape economic opportunities and economic opportunities shape norms. Yet feminist literature has shown that the dialectic can overlook the role of agency in changing and shaping norms (Mahmood, 2005; Butler 1997). Women do not take on a passive role and the internalisation of norms is not a given. Further, even if norms are internalised, this process is neither uniform nor predictable. Norms are various and not homogenous in any given social context where norms differ between class, ethnic, religious, gender, age and sexual orientation groups (Connell and Pearce 2014; Manganaro and Alozie, 2011; Davis and Greenstein, 2009; Kane, 2000). Not all actors share the same norms yet individualising norm change through the reduction of 'behaviour' can be problematic as it forecloses the broader social complexity of normative processes.

Further, norms can regulate the individual mobility of women where norms around protecting women's virtue and safety can restrict her ability to venture into public and commercial spaces, limiting access to produce or labour markets with higher returns; all limiting her opportunities for economic empowerment. Mobility can also be compounded by domestic care expectations and responsibilities (Salon and Gulyani 2010; Hunt and Samman 2016; ILO 2016).

### *2.1.4. Institutions, legislation and policy*

Finally institutions and policies are upheld by normative ideas about society, development, what is just and good and how to go about achieving such. For example, governments and the private sector under-invest in care and related services because economic norms ignore unpaid work, and do not prioritise non-exportable goods and services.

Laws and legal frameworks can institute normative values about societies. Changes in legislation can weaken derogatory norms and can strengthen helpful norms that support women's economic empowerment. An example of this might be allowing daughters as well as sons to inherit family property (Boudet et al. 2012). Yet laws don't necessarily mean adherence, and therefore are not a guarantee that these normative values will be followed by the population. Even still, there are 100 out of 173 countries have specific legal barriers that constrain women's ability to engage in employment or set up businesses (Hunt and Samman 2016).

Finally, norms also regulate development industry and policy developed. Generally in line with grand narratives of what progress should look like. Issues around norms underpinning institutions and policy are discussed in length below.

## ***2.2. Positive norms and women's economic empowerment***

Norms can, however, also have a positive effect on women's economic empowerment. The positive effects of norms can sometimes be overlooked, as policy focus is often directed towards minimising the insidious norms which hinder women's economic empowerment (World Bank 2014a; Connell and Pearse 2014). Emphasising positive norms affecting both genders can be promoted as a way to counter such negative norms. For example, emphasising the contribution of care work as a central element of the global economy may indeed further women's economic empowerment. Many development efforts have been devoted to engaging women in initiatives to support women's participation within the economy, including initiatives such as micro-credit, access to equal pay, childcare arrangements, and fair and safe working conditions.

Women's participation is seen not only as a way to improve economies around the world (Klassen and Lamanna 2009; The World Bank 2012), but also as a way to challenge restrictive norms about women (World Bank 2014a). Women participating in the economy can change norms where women and men are able to see direct implications for individuals, families and or communities as a direct result of economic empowerment. The story of Geeta and Premwati from the outskirts of Delhi is a case in point. These two women took on employment at a meat factory which not only supplemented their respective household's income, but increased their confidence; "When you start working, your heart opens up," Geeta reported in a 2016 New York Times article. "Then you're not scared anymore." However whilst Geeta and Premwati became further financially and psychologically empowered through their economic participation, there were implications for them with the patriarchy of their village. Their greater agency challenged village gendered norms held by the male leadership of their village who thought women

should be docile and submissive. Geeta and Premwati clashed with the male leadership, resulting in a violent clash with this male leadership (Barry 2016). Such an example shows the complexity of social norm change as outlined above, and how to change one norm, may indeed involve the need to address other norms. In this case, not just the norm of women working, but also women having agency in public spaces including having a voice and women being financially independent from husbands. More generally, women’s increased participation does not automatically lead to empowerment as it may also lead to an increase in work (paid labour on top of unpaid care work), or work in exploitative or oppressive activities (Marcus and Harper 2014).

Increasing the leadership of women within the economy is important in creating role models and for drawing attention to positive changes in gendered institutions. The private sector and governments are increasingly seeing that women in senior institutional roles can increase organisational effectiveness: it is estimated that companies with three or more women in senior management functions score higher in all dimensions of organisational effectiveness (Sperling and Marcati 2014). Further, women’s involvement in sport is becoming increasingly recognised as a way to build leadership capacity in women in economic spheres (Kotschwar 2014). Duflo (2011) notes, however, the relationship between economic development and women’s empowerment is not always a virtuous one, and it should not be assumed that women always make the best decisions for development and wellbeing.

Not all norms are negative in that they can enhance women’s participation in the economy. Promoting positive norms around women’s economic empowerment is an opportunity for policy for social norm change.

### ***2.3 Measuring norms in relation to Women’s Economic Empowerment***

Measuring norms is not a straightforward task, as a clear and unified conceptual understanding of what norms are is hard to nail down. The first challenge for the researcher or evaluator is to ascertain the epistemological approach to their investigation into norms. Broadly speaking there are two types of methodology – inductive and deductive – the key features of which are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Positives</b>	<b>Restraints</b>
<b>Inductive</b>	Open-ended, trying to understand specific norms within a given context	Open to explore social patterns, concepts and practise, which helps the researcher understand the complexity revolving around gendered norms with other social processes in a particular context.	Context specific nature can make national or international measurement difficult.
<b>Deductive</b>	Initial articulation of specific gendered	Context specific and so standardising notions of	The predetermined understanding of what norms are relevant in a



	norms relevant to the context being investigated	norms for comparable measures are difficult.	given context can foreclose considering the possibility of other related social phenomena and complexity.
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Table 1 also outlines the variation in the kinds of data produced through inductive and deductive methodologies, where both have positive and negative attributes for studying of norms. Still, it is possible that a mixed-method approach is possible, where inductive methods can inform standardised measures (Maxwell and Loomis 2003; Greene 2008; Teddlie and Tashakkori 2006).

Another decision for the researcher measuring norms involves choosing which particular methods to use. Options include opinion polls, attitude scales, focus groups and ethnographic studies (Connell and Pearse 2014). Table 2 outlines the attributes and restraining features of possible methods in measuring norms. Of note are opinion polls and related surveys which include the World Value’s Survey and the Gallup data poll – both referred to in this paper. Whilst both data sets provide insights into norms held by people around the world, we cannot assume that questions asked have the same resonance or meanings in different societies.

**Table 2**

<b>Methods for measuring norms</b>	<b>Attributes</b>	<b>Restraining features</b>
<b>Opinion polls</b>	Can include questionnaires carried out through face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews or online polls	Can be generalised and abstracted from the social context, often by carrying certain assumptions or superficial understandings of that context. Responses generally ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’, meaning they also cut out the complexity acquired by gaining a deeper understanding from the participant (Connell and Pearse 2014).
<b>Attitude scales</b>	Questionnaires about specific norms where answers correspond to particular ratings.	Similar limitations to opinion polls where social context can be reduced. Further scales can contain the averaging and aggregate of responses which also reduces social complexity.
<b>Focus Groups</b>	Involve bringing people together from a particular social context and asking them for their opinions on a designated topic, such as gender equality. The focus group involves a facilitated discussion, garnering responses from participants to understand opinions and perceptions of the topic.	Focus groups do not always capture the depth of the social context in which participants are engaging. They are also subject to group bias, where participants may feel pressure to respond in ways assumed to be desired by other members in the group, or by the researcher themselves (Kitzinger 1994).
<b>Ethnographic Studies</b>	Ethnography, involves a deep understanding of a social	Ethnography is generally small-scale, yet the data generated is rich and informative

	context, including the observations of social lives and norms within a specific spatial or temporal location.	(Schensul et al. 1999).
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Finally, the researcher needs to understand the challenges posed by researching gendered norm research in the bias that it directly and indirectly elicits. For example, implicit bias may emerge through self-reported norms and attitudes: people may report feeling a particular way, but their actual behaviour may be opposite. For example, the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) data on norms record what people do and what they approve of, yet these self-reported measures do not account for when people act contrary to their reported attitude towards a norm. For example, men may respond in the survey that husbands beating their wives is not justified, yet may continue to beat his wife in the home. Similarly, Cloward (2014) discovered a lack of connection between self-reported attitudes of gendered norms and actual practice by examining international anti female genital cutting (anti-FGC) and early marriage advocacy organisations and their target population. Cloward found that, whilst participants of anti-FGC and early marriage advocacy programs often reported that they were against FGC or early marriage practices, their social realities could create a situation where they continued with the practice. Cloward suggests that some research into norms can put people in a situation where they must “ultimately choose whether to present themselves accurately to all audiences and risk alienating one side or the other, or to try to have the best of both worlds through misrepresentation” (502). Provision for such misrepresentation in self-reporting in norms research thus needs to be factored in.

### ***3. Reviewing approaches to norms change and women’s economic empowerment***

Women’s economic empowerment often disrupts or challenges restrictive gender norms and roles by facilitating new models of behaviour and strengthening or reducing social and economic processes (Haneef et al. 2014; Hughes et al. 2015; World Bank 2014a). Yet, restrictive norms can also limit women’s economic empowerment and so concerted efforts regarding changes in insidious norms may be useful.

A review of the literature on norm change promoting women’s economic empowerment suggests that no silver bullet exists. Norms can change at the individual and collective level, and through targeting both structures within the gendered economy and agency (Fleming 2013; Hunt and Samman 2016; Marcus and Harper 2014). Research also shows that norm change leading to women’s economic empowerment does depend on which norms are targeted for change and why (Mackie et al 2015), meaning uniformity and linearity to norm change is an enigma. Moreover, because gendered norms are maintained by various processes and intersect with other norms, any intervention needs to be related to the broader goal of women’s economic empowerment (Marcus and Harper 2014; Marcus and Page 2014). Taking a layered approach in examining different methods for different aspects of norm change to enhance women’s economic empowerment is thus necessary.

A review of the literature shows women’s economic empowerment having four important areas for consideration when thinking about norm change: firstly, economic

empowerment as access to resources and assets (Alsop et al, 2006; Narayan et al. 2005); secondly, economic security (Davela 2014); thirdly, collective agency (Batiwala 2007; Ibrahim 2006); and fourthly, choice and decision-making ability (Kabeer, 2003; Kabeer, 1999; Olney and Salomone, 1992). I will briefly outline these four areas now and review approaches that have been taken in reducing limiting norms and increasing positive norms for each. First however, I will discuss briefly the important area of the ethics of changing norms in development policy and practice.

### ***3.1. A note on the ethics of changing norms***

Focusing on social norm change can obscure the norms inherent within the development industry and related actors who are usually presented neutrally. It can also cloud issues involved in what norms are promoted as favourable or unfavourable. Critical development scholars, however, assess the discourse promoted and programs exported as gender equality which can be a cover for hegemonic western ideas of progress and improvement (Mohanty 2003; Bernstein 1971). Development intervention is a site where relations of power and knowledge intersect with lived realities of those “being developed”. In this sense, the development intervention is never neutral; rather, it is a tool that privileges particular norms over others and can reproduce embedded systems of power, which directly affect the lived reality and wellbeing of the “recipients of development assistance”. Anthropologists of development have long held this view. Specifically, Olivier de Sardan (2005) argues that development policy and programmes support some groups’ norms and logics while simultaneously reducing space for the expression of the logics and meanings of other groups. In the case of development policy, “progress”, “development” and “wellbeing” are all contested terms, especially because they are usually defined through a Western lens which often conflicts with other norms underpinning such terms. Yet Western definitions of terms are hegemonic in development policy, and so Indigenous notions of development can endure alterity. Whether disciplinary or supportive in intent, the process of development policy and related interventions can involve control over the interpretation of events and provide opportunities for some aspirations and norms while blocking others (Mosse, 2004).

By promoting Western norms of what ‘developed’ means, development actors risk obscuring the norms already existing outside the narrow idea of the ‘modern’. Such criticisms have also been mounted on ‘universal standards’ such as Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (Brown 2000; Coomaraswamy 1999) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Douzinas 2000; Bunch 1995). Such a process can extend coloniality and obscure hegemonic relations in the name of gender equality, as the norms of what gender equality mean are firmly rooted within the Western liberal tradition (Mohanty 1988; Brown 2000; Kapur 2005). Further, dominant norms promoted by the development industry can be problematically reinforced through targeting of norms. Specifically, this could fortify the white, “heterosexual, able-bodied, liberal individual” (Burman, 2007: 150).

Secondly, it is important to examine the intersectionality of norms without assuming women as a homogenous group suffering from or sharing the same sets of norms (Brown 2000; Kapur 2005; Mohanty 1988). Relations of power also include thinking about the intersection between multiple relations of power such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, coloniality, and gender. Thinking about intersectionality helps to reduce coloniality and reproduction of global northern hegemony within development programs and projects trying to enhance gender equality (Pearse and Connell 2015).

Thirdly, norm change focused on individuals can also overlook the ontological differences between groups, particularly in conceptualising the “self” and how norms relate to this. In behavioural economics and other social science disciplines, the idea of the “self” promotes a definitive line between the “self” and the “other”. Yet this can be at odds with anthropological work that shows that relational understandings of agency and personhood are important (Karp and Jackson 1990; Riesman 1989). Focusing on individual norm change can obscure ontological differences in self, which can further coloniality.

One possible way to deal with the contentious nature of norm change is centralising the role of agency in any norm change process, intervention or policy (Sen 1999; 2009). Public deliberation and scrutiny is crucial as it allows the people to be impacted through social norm change to engaged and debate their concerns regarding relations of power in such an intervention. While many participatory approaches in development policy and practice claim to be emancipatory in having ‘the people’ as part of the development process, there is a growing realisation that this may not always be the case, and that much of the deployment of information is more about continuing the status quo than contesting it (Kothari and Cooke 2001). What is important in these deliberation processes is that relations of power are aired and contested. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970) developed a powerful process in doing this, which he called conscientisation. Conscientisation is a process that makes it possible for an agent to become aware of relations of power and oppression, thus enabling women to articulate these issues and propose actions to take to counter such relations (Summerson Carr, 2003). Conscientisation supposes that persons change in the processes of changing their relations with the surrounding environment and, above all, with other people (Martín-Baró, 1994). Such a process would be useful for deliberating and operationalizing any interventions proposing to challenge gendered norms.

Moreover, targeting gendered norms should be seen as a part of the broader women’s economic empowerment agenda and not in isolation. Outlined below is a review of possible ways to address gendered norms, but agency of these whose norms will be effected should also be at the forefront of the policy process, where suggested norm change should be deliberated and scrutinised, including the norms underpinning policy actors that put such changes forward.

### ***3.2. Economic empowerment and access to resources and assets***

Access to resources (both material and social) supports women's ability to participate in their communities and societies, and is a fundamental area for women's economic empowerment (Agarwal 1994; Batliwala 1997; Kabeer 1999; Rowlands 1997; 1995). The distribution of resources through legal frameworks and social security can champion more desirable norms for women's economic empowerment (Boudet et al. 2012). Resources can include economic security to enable a greater monetary contribution to household expenses, and a fairer balance of market-oriented opportunities for women and men, enabling legal frameworks (Hughes 2015) and land allocation (Argwal 1997). Through access to resources, women may be more in a position to negotiate, bargain and enact more desirable norms (Argwal 1997; Boudet et al 2012).

#### *Box 1: Legislation and normative frameworks*

Currently, there are various international standards and frameworks that try to promote equitable norms for women's economic empowerment. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has Articles on employment (Article 11), economic and social benefits (Article 13), and rural women (Article 14) (UN Women, 2015). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights promotes the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural fulfilment. The Covenant calls for pay equality and the guarantee of safe working conditions.

Goal 5 in the Sustainable Development Goals aims to achieve gender equality for all women and girls. Specific targets refer to valuing unpaid care and domestic work, providing social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and family. Targets include reference to "women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life", and undertaking reforms "to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws" (UN 2016). The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action aims to promote women's economic independence and addresses the structural causes of poverty (Beijing Declaration, Paragraph 26). It promotes women's equal access to economic resources, including land, credit, and science and technology (Beijing Declaration, Paragraph 35). The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action also aims to develop gender-sensitive programs to address women's economic disempowerment (Platform for Action, Paragraph 108[e]).

The ILO Convention Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers (2011) aims to enhance the working conditions of domestic workers worldwide, many whom are women and girls. The Convention specifically calls for domestic workers to be allowed the same rights as other sectors, including reasonable hours of work, time for rest, the right for collective bargaining, limiting in-kind payment, and

establishing clear expectations and conditions of employment. Following the ILO 2011 Convention, in 2012 the ILO also drafted the ILO Recommendation Concerning National Floors of Social Protection. This identified social security as a right necessary for development, and key to enabling gender equality. The ILO also has four gender equality conventions including the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, the Maternity Protection Convention, the Equal Remuneration Convention and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention. The latter two feed into the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Whilst international normative frameworks are important for setting standards and access to resources, they are not always implemented at national and local levels, nor valued to by populations (Brown 2000; Douzinas 2000). Therefore, there is an important role for civil society and NGOs to play in aligning international norms to local norms and practises. This would include facilitating public deliberation processes, to contest and debate the way such standards resonate and can take hold at a local level. Moreover, public awareness interventions should accompany changes in legislation, as legislative changes do not guarantee changes in day-to-day practise of citizens (Alexander-Scott et al. 2016).

The increase in access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as the internet, media and mobile phones can support women's economic empowerment. So much so that building digital and financial assets of women has been specified as a key driver in the HLP on women's economic empowerment. Digital assets can make the day to day tasks easier for women – such as the case with the mobile banking app M-PESA used in Kenya. The strategic use of social media has also been credited for supporting the ease of feminist collective action through mobilising groups towards action and facilitating communications between groups (HLP 2016; Alvarez 2009; Friedman 2005). Moreover, strategic engagement with print, television, online and social media is key to strengthening visibility and voice of women's agency to support norm change.

ICTs have also been credited as a way to change gendered norms through the exposure of alternative discourses about women's economic roles and responsibilities, informing women of broader processes regarding economic and global relations as well as providing virtual role models and opinion leaders (Marcus and Harper 2014). For example, Jensen and Oster (2007) found that increased access to cable television could be linked to the increased acceptance of women working outside the home and a reduced tolerability for domestic violence.

Yet access to ICTs is a problem for many people across the world, especially women. Globally, women on average are 14 percent less likely than men to own a mobile phone, and women are 23 percent less likely than men to have access to the Internet (HLP 2016). ICTs and access to media has also seen the ease in globalising adverse gendered norms – particularly those related to the commodification and sexualisation of women's bodies. For example, some corporations have been accused of using the internet or television to market for female 'beauty' products by using adverse gendered norms about what is

aesthetically desirable for women. Moreover, TV and film media can also reproduce adverse gendered norms and stereotypes about submissive and sexualised females. In a recent study, Smith et al. (2014) found from reviewing 120 films in the 11 most profitable film markets globally, Out of a total of 5,799 speaking or named characters 30.9% were female, 69.1% male. Moreover, only 23.3% of the films had a woman or a girl as a lead or co-lead driving the plot of the film (Smith et al. 2014). Such lack of representation of female lead characters and female secondary characters uphold gendered norms of women being secondary to males. Finally, as documented in HLP (2016), ICTs can perpetuate harassment and sexual violence towards women.

*Box 1: Positive role models*

Targeting norms held by populations through the use of role models, film and other media can create a counter-narrative to unlink negative associations with women. For example, showing images of a working mother or a female politician can change the status of expected behaviour to the point that the gender norm varies or becomes irrelevant (Ridgeway and Correll 2004). For example, in Tanzania, Oxfam aired a TV programme daily, highlighting the work of women farmers in the search for a ‘female food hero’. Viewers were asked to vote by text message, and their votes were combined with feedback from facilitators who had worked with the women over the past few weeks. Finalists went through training on issues ranging from land rights and marketing to HIV and AIDS. Oxfam reports that this approach allowed viewers to explore the unique challenges that women face in becoming farmers and challenged the image of farming as a male role (Kidder et al. 2014). Such an example shows the possibilities of targeting norm change within a population that promotes women’s economic empowerment. Moreover, the Indian Panchayati Raj Act, mandated an increase of women in local government from 5 percent in 1993 to 40 percent in 2005. The impact of this increase in women leaders changed male’s acceptance of women as leaders and provided women with more confidence that they could run for public office. In some locations, these female role models affected girls’ personal aspirations and parents’ career aspirations for their daughters (HLP 2016). Also in India, a randomized experiment found that exposure to female leaders reduced the gender gap in aspirations by 20 percent in parents and 32 percent in adolescents (HLP 2016).

Recommendations: access to resources and assets

- Removal of restrictive legislation that limits women’s access to resources and assets.
- Public awareness interventions should accompany changes in legislation, in order to encourage the uptake of legislative changes in day to day practise.

- Increasing efforts for women's access to ICT technology will could help facilitate positive gendered norm change (One of the seven HLP's drivers of women's economic empowerment)
- Pressure should be put on the private sector to ban the production of adverse gendered norms used to increase consumption in their products.

### ***3.3. Economic empowerment and markets***

Targeting gendered norms underpinning the gendered economic system is important as the gendered economy systematically overlooks much of women's productive labour (such as care work and child raising), and maintains a gendered division of labour. Women's paid productive work is, overrepresented in the informal economy, meaning women are subject to precarious, sporadic, and often dangerous working conditions (World Bank 2012; ILO 2014). Women are also often paid less than men across formal and informal sectors globally (UN Women 2015). As outlined earlier, gendered occupational segregation is also a major issue.

Clearly, governments can play a role in supporting gendered norm change in addressing inequality within the market and valuing women's work. For example, whilst some women prefer flexible work arrangements for care work (Kabeer et al. 2011), they are at a disadvantage because they are not provided a minimum wage, or gain any employment benefits or protections for such work.

Norms that restrict women from engaging in the economy can change when women have an economic floor to provide a secure base to sustain action and reduce risks (McKay 2006; Standing 2014). This is particularly important when thinking about the future challenges facing the achievement of full employment globally as a way of securing women's economic empowerment. Secure employment for women has been rapidly reducing all over the world (Hunt and Samman 2016; Cook and Razavi 2012). Moreover, the Oxford Martin School showing that up to 50% of current jobs globally will be replaced by automation in the next twenty years (Frey and Osborne 2013). Macro-economic policy has also seen a cutting of public service budgets, which directly burdens women's unpaid domestic labour through a reduction of state support to health, education, welfare and childcare services (Samman et al 2016).

#### *Box 3: Social security and economic floors*

Both Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) and Universal Basic Income (UBI) literatures articulate the importance of providing economic security to women through regular cash transfers. CCTs target payments to vulnerable groups to encourage specific development goals that aim to change gendered norms (through targeting girl education or maternal health care). Payments are conditional, requiring the fulfilment of certain criteria such as sending children to school, vaccinating them, or spending the funds on particular goods. CCTs have been credited with helping reduce inequality in Latin America. Brazil's Bolsa Família, for example, transferred conditional



payments to over 26% of Brazilian households. De Brauw et al (2014) finds that the Bolsa Família program impacted on household norms by increasing women's decision-making power in spheres related to children's school attendance, health expenses, contraception, and household durable goods purchase

The Universal Basic Income (UBI) differs from CCT in that there are no conditions placed on recipients. The idea behind UBI is to enable women (and men) a secure and regular economic base to create real freedom for women – freedom from exploitation and rising economic insecurity, and freedom to live a life people value or have reason to value (Standing 2014; Van Paris 2006). UBI operates from the premise that economic security in the form of a regular subsistence grant, is necessary to participate in social and economic life in a dignified way. UBI diverges from the Western social security system, which was originally designed to support people out of work temporarily (Ferguson 2015). UBI has been argued as a way of changing the meaning of how productive 'work' is defined, through providing women an unconditional and regular payment for domestic work (McKay 2007).

For example, a Universal Basic Income trial carried out in rural India by UNICEF and the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) provides an interesting case study. In eight villages in Madhya Pradesh, India, men and women were given 200 rupees per calendar month and children 100 rupees per calendar month from June 2011 to May 2012. Compared to non-UBI villages, the payments supported women to develop capabilities and obtain more resources. Specifically, the women were able to invest this capital into other economic and social activities that increased their own income (and that of their household) by up to 16%. Moreover, the payments also started to change gendered norms in the study sites. Women opened individual bank accounts as part of the trial, and 53% of them had saved money individually by the end of the trial. The trial also changed gendered decision-making roles in households (Davala et al. 2015). For example, in the baseline, 71% of women said household decisions were made by the household head, but after the trial only 53% still said this was true. Whilst it is difficult to draw clear causations from this UBI trial, there are interesting implications for these results when thinking about norms and the concept of an economic floor that provides security.

Whilst some have argued that cash transfer programs create more work for women, the emancipatory potential for such programs in reconstituting norms around what productive work means, as well as providing women freedom from exploitation and freedom to choose lives they value, cannot be overlooked.

*Recommendations: markets and economic security*

- Ratify and fully apply the Domestic Workers Convention No. 189 setting labour standards for domestic workers.
- Consider providing an economic floor to provide women the freedom from exploitation and the freedom to choose lives they value, supporting the sustainability of norms empowering women.
- The use of role models and media in norm change campaigns and support community-level norm change programs. Such efforts should focus at challenging occupational segregation in the market economy and care work as women's work.
- The use of media and collective action to contest norms that insist on restricting women's mobility in public spaces.
- Government/private sector to value care and domestic services as productive labour. Values of such productive labour should be mandatory in all analyses of GDP.

**3.4. Economic Empowerment and Collective agency**

The extensive development studies literature shows how collective agency can further the wellbeing goals of individuals and groups, with great importance for the poor and marginalised (Ballet *et al.* 2007; Uyan-Semerci 2007; Ibrahim 2006; Deneulin 2014; Evans 2002). Collective agency is not just the sum of the agency of individual members in a group, but arises from the collaboration of individual agents and takes on a form of its own (Alkire and Deneulin 2002). The collective capability of a group can be more effective than any individual's capability alone (Ibrahim 2006).

Collective agency has an instrumental value to the wellbeing of members in the group (Heyer *et al* 2005, Cleaver 2007; LeGrand 1997), and considered to be essential for broader political change (Sen 1999; Ostrom 1990; 1992; Ibrahim, 2006); including changes in restrictive gendered norms and a way in which positive norms are reinforced and advocated (Sakiko Fukuda-Parr 2003). Collective agency provides an impetus to contest derogatory gendered norms and uphold institutions such as the market, marriages or customary laws that can oppress women.

*Box 4: Collective agency and social norm change*

Collective agency and women working together to contest or defend access and participation to economic opportunities is very important. In Nepal, Oxfam facilitated women's discussion groups with women seed producers as a key instrument of their economic empowerment. Kidder *et al* (2014) reports that women seed producers in these groups gained confidence, access to information, and collective voice on their priority farming issues. Women reported that for the first time, they realised that their voices could be heard in a public space. Women collective action groups then successfully took on a range of issues from latrine construction through training on new seed varieties to polygamy (Kidder *et al* 2014). This example indicates the ability of collective agency in change deceptive norms not just held by the women

themselves, but also in contesting broader gendered institutions such as polygamy.

Moreover, collective agency can also sustain social norm change. For example, Agarwal (1997) through examining women's agency in Kerala India argues that, "An individual woman who breaks seclusion norms can easily be penalized by her caste group, say by casting aspersions on her character or shunning her. Such reprisals are less possible if a group of women decide to transgress the rules" (p.49).

*Box 5: Critical education and public deliberation*

Critical education is a way for women affected by particular norms to decide the best way to go about changing them. For example, in reviewing what "empowerment" meant for women's movements in India, Batiwala (2007) argues that women's empowerment is a transformative idea challenging not just the patriarchy but also pushing back against structures of class, race, ethnicity, caste and religion, all contributing to the intersectionality of gendered norms for women in India. These women's groups adopted feminist popular-education strategies that created, "new spaces for women to collectivise around shared experiences of poverty, exclusion, and discrimination, critically analyse the structures and ideologies that sustained and reinforced their oppression, and raised consciousness of their own sense of subordinations" (Batiwala 2007: 650).

Critical education and public deliberation can also be used as a way change adverse gender norms at a community level; especially with reluctant men. Community level discussions can be led by local people encourage reflection, alternative views and avenues for change around restrictive gender norms. Marcus and Page (2014) shows that community-wide mobilisation and education programs were effective in changing adverse gender norms in 27 different studies from countries across the world.

Recommendations for collective agency and norm change:

- Engage with women's groups to discuss and deliberate appropriate means and goals for norm change.
- Give legitimacy to women's collective action groups through providing access to funds, provide technical support and capacity building, and link them with other women's groups nationally and internationally.

**3.5 Economic Empowerment, choice and decision-making ability**

Choice and decision-making ability is also an important area for women's economic empowerment, and directly relates to control over decisions regarding assets, income and spending. As Kabeer (2003) argues, this definition of choice implies that there are the material conditions for women to choose other options from, not to mention that women may be unaware of the existence of other choices. For example, an illiterate person would have a very different realm of choices available than an educated person. In addition, choice removes the value component of the choice itself – or the intrinsic value (Alkire

and Deneulin 2009; Alkire 2008). For example, a woman might not make decisions about minor household purposes because she and her husband have decided that this year he will look after domestic matters, as she does not value them and wants to focus her attention towards political leadership. In this context, not having the choice of when the housework is undertaken does not mean she is less empowered. Hence, the importance of women valuing the decision in the first place.

*Box 6: Education in schools*

Education strategies are used for social norm change in school aged children. For example the Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) school-based program aimed to help male and female students aged between 12-14 adopt more gender-equitable norms. Activities used by this program include role-playing games, interactive extracurricular activities, and critical reflection-centred lessons which explore topics like girls attaining higher education, reducing gender based violence, delaying marriage, and more equitable sharing of household tasks with men and boys. An evaluation of this program reported that in Mumbai after two years of implementation among 8,000 students “showed that participating students were more likely to support higher education for girls, openly express opposition to gender based violence and champion delaying marriage” (Alexander-Scott et al 2015: 29).

Gendered norms are also linked to decision-making ability in that gendered norms can regulate who makes decisions and who does not. This regulation can happen not just within the household, but also in public spaces such as the market, the state, schools, and the community. Yet through economic empowerment and access to opportunities, women may increase their bargaining and negotiation and increase their ability to make decisions in the household and public spheres (Argwal 1997; Pearse and Connell 2016).

*Box 7: Men and norm change*

The focus of norm change should not just be targeted at women. There is also a need for the norms of men to change. When the International Men and Gender Equality Study (IMAGES) took place in Brazil, Chile, Croatia, India and Mexico, 87-90% of men saw gender equality and gains for women coming at the expense of men (Marcus and Harper 2014). Yet there are programs that have successfully targeted men’s gendered norms to change also. Generally they involve the use of male role models to promote particular norms. The Brazilian organisation Promundo developed a program to advocate gender equitable practices such as men being caregivers. Simultaneously, this program also helped men challenge the acceptability of violence against women (World Bank 2014). Specifically, the Promundo Programme H aims to weaken negative norms and promote new descriptive norms by working with men to assess their own attitudes and training them to diffuse messages throughout the community. A self evaluation of this project showed that there was a significantly higher proportion of respondents that supported gender equitable

ideas at six months and one year post intervention, compared to control group (HLP 2016; Alexander-Scott et al. 2016).

Discourse theory scholars working on power show how at the subjective level, the control of knowledge conditions agents' aspirations and agency (Foucault 1980; Lessa 2006). Yet, power relations can also constitute agency (Butler, 1997; Foucault 1980) where (through the process of subjectivity) power shifts from its status as a condition of agency to the subjects' own agency. Jo Rowlands (1997) has described this power with emancipatory potential as the "power within". This can be understood through feelings of satisfaction, self-worth and internal strength to undertake agency within economic realms (Klein 2016; 2014). The power within also becomes an important area for contesting norms around economic structures and gendered division of labour. For example, one woman in Bamako Mali talked about the importance of the power within (translated as *dusu*) in taking on the role of a taxi driver, a domain dominated by male drivers. The woman said her *dusu* was important to stay confident in being one of the only female taxi drivers in the city at that time.

*Box 8: Individual behavioural change*

The uptake of behavioural economics in changing individual norms and behaviours should be examined, as it has implications for women's economic empowerment. Behavioural economics has evolved the field of economics, using psychological research to controvert the neoclassical description of individual behaviour as the rational, self-interested, utility maximising, coherent and stable individual (Kahneman 2003). Behavioural economics sees individuals as having non-standard preferences, beliefs and decision-making capabilities (DellaVigna 2009). For example, DellaVigna (2009) argues that, unlike neo-classical economics where preferences and decision making are consistent temporally and spatially, behavioural economics finds individual preferences change depending on beliefs of individuals, and the time and environment in which they find themselves.

Behavioural economics has become an important conduit to encourage efficient and effective norms in economic activity (McMahon, 2015). For example, policy makers may use the 'nudge' where particular decisions are not enforced *per se*, instead opting to make particular options to the individual more attractive, which encourages the 'right' choice (Sunstein 2013; Thaler and Sunstein 2013; WDR 2014). A review of the literature, however, cautions augmenting individual norms towards economic efficiency and effectiveness in a systematic fashion. This is because the goal of economically efficient and effective decision making is contentious, and can overlook and obscure social and political complexity (Ferguson 2000; Hamann 2009, Gerson 2011). For example, the tendency to shift the emphasis from underdevelopment and poverty as a complex process linked to structural inequalities to that of a deficiency in individual economic decision making (McMahon 2015; Madra and Adaman 2013). Behavioural change towards economic efficacy and effectiveness can also obscure the norms of the development industry, which as outlined above, may reinforce coloniality through maintaining unequal relations of power between the global North and the global South (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015; Quijano 2000). Differently, linking individual norm change with broader relations of power and gendered processes provides opportunities

for sustained change. Such possibilities include critical education and exposure to alternative ideas, as well as norm change linked with broader changes in global distribution.

Recommendations: choice and decision making ability:

- Target education initiatives for men and boys to challenge restrictive gendered norms about men and women. Initiatives should focus both of the domestic and public spheres.
- Educating school-aged children (both boys and girls) about adverse gendered norms in school programs can promote transformative norms early on.
- Use context relevant male and female roles models to educate boys and girls about restrictive gendered norms.
- Support women and girls groups that aim to build critical education regarding restrictive norms in the gendered economy and build women's 'power within'.

#### ***4. Implications for Entry Points to the UNSG's High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment Policy***

There are some crucial points from this review that are important to highlight when thinking about future policy aimed at women's economic empowerment. Norms are often left out of analysis and policy designed to address the gendered economy. Yet gendered norms are important because they regulate differential control and access over resources, opportunities and agency, restricting women's economic empowerment. Changing norms can include contesting and eliminating insidious and derogatory norms that restrict gender equality. Change also can include strengthening norms that support gender equality.

Interventions targeting women's economic empowerment should not just focus on increasing women's economic opportunities but also address the norms underpinning the gendered economy. Gendered norms within the economy can disadvantage care and women's reproductive labour, and replicate inequality and relational poverty affecting women across the world. Targeting norms therefore needs to be considered with the intersectionality of gender with other power relations such as ethnicity, class, race, age and culture.

These findings have implications for the entry points of the United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Panel on women's economic empowerment. Below, I outline areas that with attention, could have rapid effects on women's economic empowerment. Firstly however, all initiatives undertaken to change norms must place agency at central in the policy-making process. Public deliberation and scrutiny is crucial as it allows the people to be impacted through social norm change to engaged and debate their concerns regarding relations of power and suitability in such an intervention.

*Agriculture*

Women's agricultural work is impacted on formal and informal frameworks that regulate and reinforce gendered norms, particularly in regards to access and ownership of land. Legal frameworks and norms that restrict women's economic empowerment should be eliminated. Equally important is the promotion of laws and norms that support gender equality.

Further norms that underpin economic policies that impact on women's agricultural productivity should be targeted, including trade and fiscal policies. Further, practices and norms that lock women out of access to credit, productive farm inputs (fertilizers) and markets, need to be addressed.

Digital inclusion is a mechanism to help facilitate changes in adverse gendered norms in agricultural production. There is merit in using media, entertainment and stories of role models to advocate for positive gendered norms and to contest restrictive gendered norms. However many women around the world do not have access to mobile phones, internet or televisions and so there is a need for increasing digital inclusion for the sake of gendered norm change.

### *Informal workers*

Disproportionately, the world's informal workers are women. Many are subject to undignified and even dangerous work. Through changing the norms around unpaid productive labour (such as child care, domestic duties) may help bring visibility to aspects of the world's informal economy. Moreover, norms around access to resources should also be challenged through media, the use of role models and critical education. In addition to these initiatives, addressing norms underpinning macroeconomic policy that undermines inclusive growth is needed. As too is the removal of restrictive legislation that limits women's access to resources and assets should also accompany.

An economic floor is important for sustaining norm change, giving women economic security to say no to undignified and risky working conditions. The use of media and collective action to contest norms that insist on restricting women's mobility in public spaces should also be use incorporated to generate locally appropriate ways to educate populations.

### *Formal Sector Employees*

Improving women's pay and the conditions of their work is important. Not only should norm change be targeted to value (currently) unpaid productive work, but occupational segregation in the paid economy should also be examined. The use of role models and media to challenge such gendered norms within the economy could be useful. So too is the targeting of education initiatives for men and boys that challenge restrictive gendered norms about both men and women's economic roles. Initiatives should focus both of the domestic and public economic spheres.

Moreover, norm change through role models and media could also target implicit bias within the formal work setting. Unconscious and detrimental attitudes and beliefs towards women's abilities within the workplace accounts for a high proportion of the gender pay gap in the global North (Blau and Kahn 2016).

Finally, legislation supported by community advocacy needs to protect women from gender based violence. Placing violence against women in all forms as a significant threat to women's economic empowerment.

### *Women-owned enterprises*

Governments and the private sector could support women-owned enterprises and co-operatives to create 'role models' for challenging norms that support women's leadership in enterprises. Such examples could be communicated to men and boys to challenge restrictive gendered norms about women's role in the economy.

Adequate support needs to be given to women leading enterprises for any domestic and care duties, so they do not have to do effectively two jobs. Also important is support given to women and girls groups to build critical education regarding restrictive norms in the gendered economy and build women's 'power within'.

Educating school-aged children about adverse gendered norms in school programs can promote transformative norms early on.

Finally, rethinking the definition of 'productivity' may also be useful in changing norms around the undervaluation of care work, child raising and domestic duties. Currently, the definition of productivity is tied to monetary value and labour outside of the home, but if 'work' is to be redefined, productivity will need to go beyond just monetary value.

### *Investing in care work*

The burden of unpaid productive work falls disproportionately on women. It is not necessarily enough to encourage participation in the paid workforce, as for many women this just creates extra work on top of care work. Therefore, normative change targeting the undervaluing of care work is needed. Possible areas for intervention include promoting private homes as 'workplaces' through providing domestic workers and care services with a minimum wage, and employment benefits. Such initiatives should be legislated to safeguard against changes in ruling governments. Of interest here is the idea of a universal basic income that would pay women for their productive labour outside the currently paid workforce. This economic floor would also provide women the freedom from exploitation and the freedom to choose lives they value.

Moreover, the use of role models and media to show how care work is productively valuable to society, could also accompany any initiatives to help challenge deeply entrenched gendered ideologies. These initiatives should be deliberated with local feminist groups to avoid the weakening of positive local conceptions of gender relations and institutions. Role model initiatives should target men, as much as women and could be introduced in school programs.

Governments and the private sector should be encouraged to lead themselves to value care and domestic services as productive labour. Indeed, valuing unpaid care labour is a specific target of Sustainable Development Goal 5. One way to value unpaid productive labour is to make it a mandatory measure in GDP analyses.



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