Shifting Social Norms for Transformative WASH:

Review of Concepts, Literature and Practice

Review at a glance

Who is this for?

This review, along with the allied guidance, is intended to support WASH actors with relevant examples of how to change harmful and exclusionary social norms in the context of WASH programming. WASH organisations are those that wholly or mostly work on WASH, in forms including advocacy, infrastructure, governance, finance, capacity development and behaviour change. This review is intended for those who would like to take a 'deeper dive' into understanding norms - program planners and management staff, technical advisors, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) staff, many of whom are already integrating GEDSI into their programming and are looking for the most effective approaches to achieve and sustain long-term change.

About Water for Women

Water for Women supports improved health, gender equality and wellbeing in Asian and Pacific communities through socially inclusive, sustainable and resilient water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) projects and research. It is the Australian Government's flagship WASH program, delivered as part of Australia's aid program, investing AUD118.9 million over five years. Water for Women is partnering with civil society organisations and research organisations to deliver 33 projects in 15 countries. Knowledge and learning are central to Water for Women and partners, positioning the Fund as an important contributor to global knowledge development and sharing in inclusive WASH. Water for Women's Learning Agenda promotes collaboration and learning between all partners to support long-term changes to inclusive and resilient WASH policy and practice. This review is a product of a dedicated learning initiative focused on shifting social norms within WASH programs under Water for Women's Learning Agenda.

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Front cover: Women participants lead a community development health workshop in Dagana, Bhutan. Credit: SNV/Aidan Dockery

Abbreviations

CC Program	Communities Care: Transforming Lives and Preventing Violence Program
CFAR	Centre for Advocacy and Research, India
CoC	Champions of Change
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ESCOW	East Sepik Council of Women
ESDPA	East Sepik Disabled People's Association
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GWMT	Gender and WASH Monitoring Tool
IEC	Information Education Communication
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KAP	Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LfC	Leadership for Change Program
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MHH	Menstrual Health and Hygiene
NCCM	National Council for Childhood and Motherhood
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPD	Organisations of Persons with Disabilities
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RHO	Rights Holder Organisation
RWAMREC	Rwanda Men's Resource Centre
SAT	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Self-Assessment Tool
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SGM	Sexual and Gender Minority
SMS	Short Message Service
UTS-ISF	University of Technology Sydney's Institute for Sustainable Futures
VAW	Violence Against Women
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WASH-GEM	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene - Gender Equality Measure

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Executive summary

Social norms can be defined as expectations that people in a group conform to a rule of behaviour because they believe most other people in the group do it, and most other people in the group believe they ought to conform to it (Bicchieri, 2014). Norms on gender and disability are subsets of social norms.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs have leveraged certain social norms to contribute to WASH outcomes, such as women's traditional roles as wives and mothers or stereotypes of all people with disabilities as dependent on caregivers. This runs the risk of reinforcing restrictive roles, constraining the leadership and participation of women and those living with vulnerabilities, and reducing the opportunity for greater equality.

First and foremost, it is important to recognise that norms are complex to identify and address explicitly. Therefore, measuring change in social norms is challenging, but this should not prevent the WASH sector from doing more in this area. Harmful WASH practices can be perpetuated by social expectations about that behaviour. Integrating social norms initiatives into a WASH program can increase the likelihood of sustained behaviour change and lead to wider social change to ensure no one is left behind.

As well as highlighting tools and resources applied to norms change in other sectors, this review identifies the range of norms that can be influenced in WASH programs, the tools or approaches that can be used to influence them, and opportunities for amplifying positive change. Water for Women has been working to meet the needs and interests of women, girls, people with disabilities, transgender people and other marginalised groups in private and public spheres. The examples in this review suggest that to reduce tolerance of exclusionary and harmful social norms within communities, WASH programs can catalyse community-led action to end harmful practices and norms that perpetuate inequality, stigma and violence. In collaboration with rights holder organisations (RHOs), such as women's rights organisations, WASH actors can socialise the change that is happening and reinforce new norms and behaviours.

The main lessons from Water for Women's WASH projects are as follows:

> **Social norms underpin practical WASH needs, behaviours, and strategic interests**

> **Do No Harm is vital in norms change**

> **RHOs can lead social norms change**

> **WASH actors can be more systematic in promoting social norms change**

> **Staff must be resourced to implement social norms change activities**

> **Maintaining social norms requires scaling and monitoring.**

This review is complemented by practical guidance on how to shift social norms that underpin behaviours preventing (particularly) women, girls, and people with disabilities and from other marginalised groups from participating and benefiting equally in WASH programs. More targeted strategies can be developed within WASH programs to focus specifically on exclusionary social norms that perpetuate harmful practices, such as developing a social norms framework for WASH programs, more intentional work with an individual's reference group, and effective programmatic approaches and partnerships with RHOs.

Introduction

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs can and should contribute to transforming social norms and achieving gender equality. Water for Women's CSO and research partners are working in diverse ways to support improved access to WASH for women, girls, people with disabilities, people from sexual and gender minority (SGM) communities and other marginalised groups to ensure their meaningful participation, and to hold duty-bearers to account. Under the leadership of national actors and in partnership with RHOs, religious leaders, communities and other stakeholders, Water for Women partners have been at the forefront of efforts to ensure no-one is left behind, including by seeking to change harmful and exclusionary social norms.

Promoting gender equality is slowly becoming standard practice in the WASH sector, and increasingly WASH organisations are investing in staff capacity and GEDSI training. However, leveraging women's traditional roles for short term WASH outcomes is still prevalent in projects, running the risk of reinforcing roles of women as wives and mothers and limiting the opportunity for greater equality more broadly. Similarly, traditional social norms and expectations around disability can perpetuate discrimination and inequities and reinforce how societies value people with disabilities (ableism). Without due care, projects could exacerbate discriminatory treatment and exclusion of people with disabilities. Partnerships with RHOs have helped embed GEDSI in WASH strategies and targets that ensure no-one is left behind.

This review identifies promising practices to guide social norm initiatives in WASH programming and build knowledge and capacity around social norm change that may improve the future implementation of WASH programs. The examples describe diverse programmatic initiatives that have worked with people from SGM communities as well as people with disabilities and people living with other vulnerabilities. The work of Water for Women partners addresses the social norms that can affect WASH behaviours and participation in decision-making processes. This review (and the accompanying guidance) seeks to support WASH programs to shift harmful and exclusionary social norms to achieve more effective, inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

This review provides an assessment of the approaches used to address social norms affecting WASH programs at the household, community and organisational levels. It had two components: a desk review of relevant global, regional and country documents and resources, and a review of Water for Women reports and documents and consultations with Water for Women partners.

Defining social norms

Norms matter because they drive our behaviour, beliefs, and expectations (Bicchieri, 2014). They can "help communities and societies function, binding them together and promoting collective behaviours" (UNICEF, 2021). Norms are often invisible and taken for granted. Certain norms are culturally specific, and others are universal. Norms may be harmful to some members of the community and beneficial to others. Some norms work to perpetuate discrimination and disadvantage, because they are related to power dynamics. Norms continue because people want/need acceptance by people who matter to them (also called reference groups) (Bicchieri, 2014).

People's actions are shaped by their environment and informed by social norms, values and structures. Understanding the role social norms play in influencing behaviours matters because it means behaviour change initiatives can go beyond changing individual practices to achieve collective-level change by changing norms deeply rooted in communities. People also have the ability and agency to shape norms, increasing the likelihood of sustaining behaviour change (UNICEF, 2021). Common terms used in social norms programs are defined in Table 1 below (see Annex 1 for full list).

Table 1. Definitions used in social norms programs. Adapted from UNICEF (2021)

Term	Definitions	Example
Social norms	Social norms are the perceived, informal, mostly unwritten rules that define acceptable and appropriate actions within a given group or community, thus guiding human behaviour. Such norms are usually internalised from an early age.	"I think that most women in my community collect water for the household."
Attitudes	Social norms might be different from people's personal attitudes. Attitudes refer to what an individual thinks and feels about a behaviour or practice, and whether they judge it favourably or unfavourably.	"I think that girls should clean the toilets at school."
Outcome expectancies	A person's beliefs or expectations about how others will respond if they engage (or do not engage) in a certain behaviour. Outcome expectancies can be positive (rewards) or negative (sanctions).	Reward: "Once I build a toilet for my household, I will be a respected member of the community." Sanction: "If I speak in a meeting, the whole community will think I am being disrespectful to my husband."
Descriptive norm – "what I think others do"	A rule of behaviour that people engage in because they think other people in their reference group do the same thing.	"I will stop open defecation because everyone in my village has pledged to stop open defecation."
Injunctive norms – "what I think others approve of"	Injunctive norms influence behaviour when people engage in a practice because they believe that others in their group expect them to do so, will reward them if they do, and sanction them if they do not.	"I will wash my hands before feeding my children because my mother-in-law says that I should do this, and my community thinks good mothers ensure their family stay healthy."
Pluralistic ignorance	Pluralistic ignorance describes a situation in which most members of a group or community conform to a norm because they assume that the majority also conforms or expects them to do so, while in reality, most people privately disapprove of the norm.	"I think most people in my community support girls dropping out of school when they start menstruating."
Reference groups – "the people to whom the social norm applies"	Reference group members believe that the opinions and behaviours of other people in the group matter and determine whether they conform to a norm. Reference groups reward people for following a norm and punish them if they do not.	"I care about what the community elders and traditional leaders think about my husband doing housework."
Gender norms	Gender norms refer to collective beliefs and expectations within a community or society, at a given point in time, about what behaviours are appropriate for women and men and SGM communities, and the relation and interactions between them. Gender norms are socially constructed and are a subset of social norms. Norms may promote male privilege and exacerbate discriminatory treatment of girls, women, and people of non-binary gender identities.	"I think menstruating women and girls are impure and should be forbidden to go to school, play, or participate in community events."
Ableist norms	Ableism is the social norm of being able. It frames being nondisabled as the ideal and disability as an abnormality. Norms on disability are socially constructed and are a subset of social norms.	"I think we should design WASH facilities that only cater to nondisabled people, we can think about inclusion later."

Social norms can be divided into two components: descriptive norms, which are beliefs about what other people are doing, and injunctive norms, which are beliefs about what other people think people should do (Mackie, 2018). People choose to perform a behaviour because they expect that their reference group does so and that others believe they should do so (Bicchieri, 2014). Figure 1 presents a set of questions that help profile collective behaviours and identify the mechanisms perpetuating them.
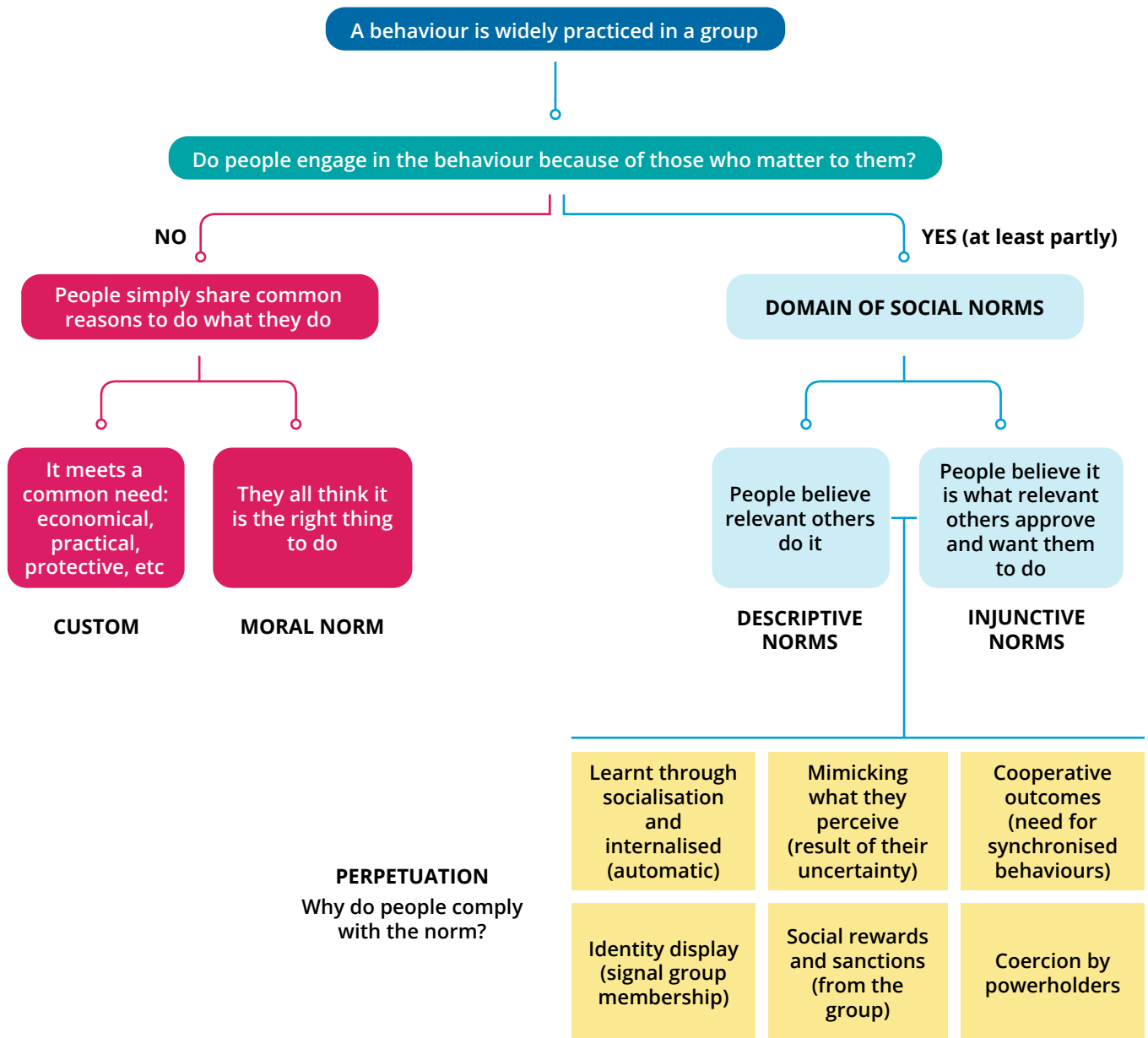
Figure 1. Understanding collective behaviours and the mechanisms perpetuating them   Adapted from Petit & Zalk (2019, p.19)

Figure 2 refers to the visible behaviours and invisible underlying norms that drive behaviours (and attitudes). The iceberg shows that deep culture – relationships and roles, beliefs and values, attitudes and norms, and language and communication – is unseen. Behaviours and practices at the surface are visible and are the expressions of the unseen deep culture.
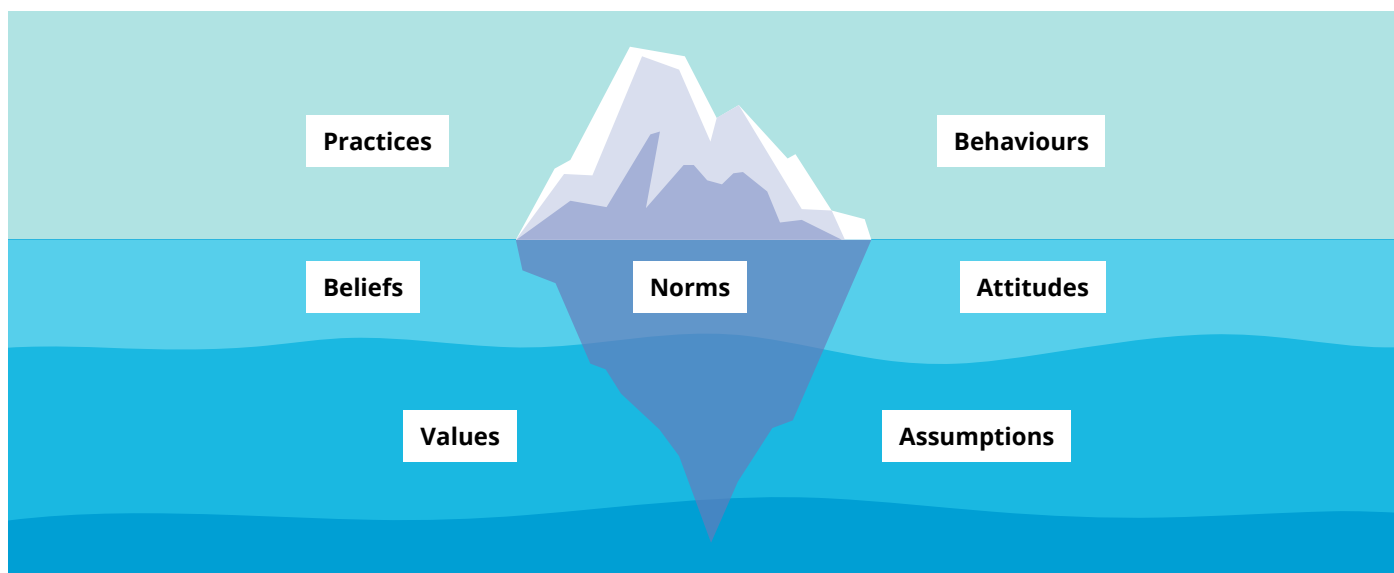
Figure 2. The culture iceberg model | Adapted from Hall (1976)

Someone may disapprove of a behaviour but choose to keep practising it because they believe others expect it of them. Those who do not conform to norms may be punished or excluded. While they themselves think a harmful norm should be ended, because they assume most others in the community are still practising the norm, they will still conform. However, norms can be misperceived; people can have an exaggerated sense of what others do (known as pluralistic ignorance). The strength of the norm will determine if a person engages in a behaviour with which they do not necessarily agree (Figure 3).

WEAK	Pluralistic ignorance	**Overlap with individual attitudes**	Fully aligned	STRONG
	Majority adherance	**Sticking to the norm**	Full adherence/no deviants	
	No or weak sanctions	**Consequence if non-compliance**	Severe sanctions/identity loss	
	Low	**Likelihood of consequences**	High	
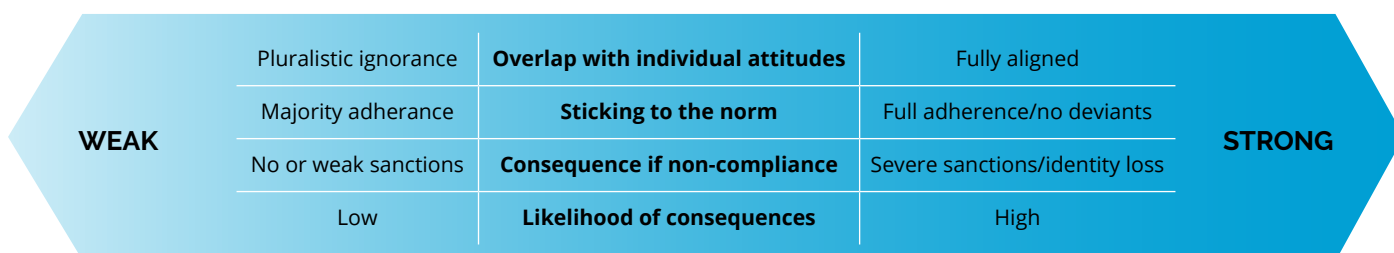
Figure 3. Factors that make a norm powerful | Adapted from Petit & Zalk (2019, p. 20)

What does changing social norms mean in practical terms for WASH programs?

Social norms are important for WASH programs because certain harmful behaviours and beliefs can be perpetuated by social norms and unequal power relations. Certain people may be unable to change their WASH behaviours unless they think most others are willing to change as well. Helping people talk openly about a norm and share their opinion – for instance, in community dialogues – can show others that most people either:

> privately disagree with the norm and can then be encouraged to do something about it together, or

> agree with a norm, in which case discussion, debate, and dialogue about the harmful effects, how things could be different, and about the benefits of change, could be useful.

Elements of working with social norms

Change the underlying structures, not just the behaviours

The culture iceberg model (Figure 2) indicates that education and habits are not enough to change WASH behaviours; the underlying structures of deep culture must be reformed. Therefore, activities should be designed to change the social norm related to a behaviour as well as the underlying power structures. Norm-shifting initiatives are different from typical WASH community participation processes – the topic will be different, as well as the target audience/unit of focus. This also requires WASH actors to critically reflect on what we're doing, how we're doing it, and why we're doing it in that way, who gets to be part of that process of changing exclusionary ways of thinking/being.

Catalyse community-led change

The aim with social norms initiative is not to impose a set of values, behaviours, and practices (such as those from the Global North) but to catalyse community-led action to transform the harmful attitudes and practices that community members have identified. For instance, working with RHOs, WASH actors can help strengthen existing **positive social norms** and support **change that is already underway** to weaken harmful social norms. Working with **role models** (people who have already abandoned the norm), identifying allies and connecting them with individuals and reference groups who are leading for change will help make a difference.

Scale matters with norms

Enough people must see that enough people are changing (Mackie, 2018). The aim is to reach a critical mass across large areas ("scaling out") and through policy and WASH systems ("scaling up") (see Figure 4). Attention here is on "scaling deep" to transform norms that contribute to discrimination and people and groups being left behind (Riddell & Moore, 2015). All scale elements are complementary, and an effective WASH program attends to all three.

Minimise the risk of backlash

Most social norms are tied to the identity of community groups, so there is a constant risk of backlash from individuals in communities or push-back from authorities.

Scale Up:

"Impacting laws and policy"

Changing institutions at the level of policy, rules and laws

Scale Out:

"Impacting greater numbers"

Replication and dissemination, increasing number of people or communities impacted

Scale Deep:

"Impacting cultural roots"

Changing relationships, cultural values and beliefs, "hearts and minds"

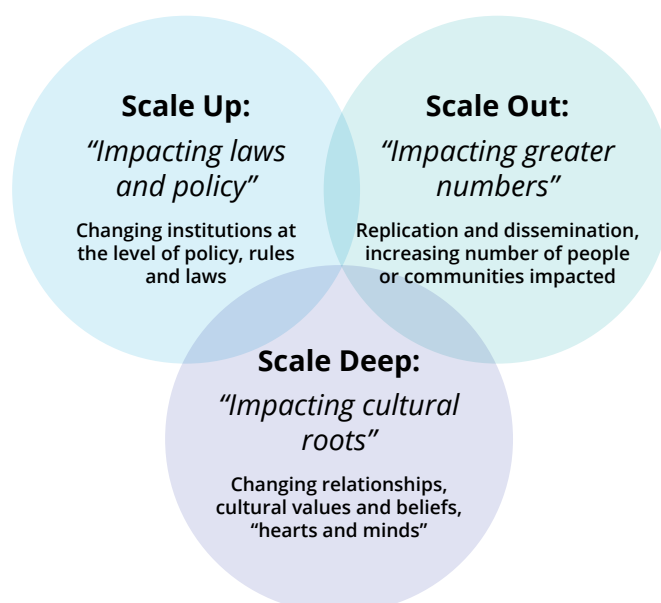**Figure 4.** Scaling out, scaling up, scaling deep   Riddell & Moore (2015)

A model for social norms change

Few WASH programs have explicit approaches to inform program design for social norms change. The following highlights a flexible step-by-step approach to incorporating norms change when designing, implementing and monitoring an initiative within a WASH program. This process should be seen as a circular model rather than a linear/prescriptive approach. A central strategy is Do No Harm; any WASH program can potentially result in negative consequences, particularly for marginalised people, who may inadvertently be exposed to increased stigmatisation or risk of gender-based or other targeted violence. Understanding that resistance is inevitable and being prepared for it is the starting point for developing effective strategies to overcome it. It is also important to recognise the Do No Harm aspect of "outing" early adopters in social norms change.

Resource. The first step is starting with ourselves, examining our own attitudes and biases and the extent to which we conform to certain norms that we identify as harmful/unhelpful. This also involves equipping professionals – government and non-government organisation (NGO) field officers and community mobilisers – with the social norms knowledge, skills, tools and resources to design, implement and monitor social norms initiatives necessary to stimulate discussion, reflection and action towards community-level norms change.

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Map. Increase understanding of social norms and reference groups; map how harmful and positive social norms are practised, by whom, how and why, as well as whether people misperceive others' views. This is often done using participatory methods and formative research using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The purpose is to understand how social norms uphold harmful WASH practices, the influence of reference groups and communication patterns, as well as whether positive role models exist.

∨

Embed. This step involves embedding a social norms initiative in WASH program approaches i.e., scaling deep. The key way to change norms is through dialogue. Sharing views and experience can break stereotypes. Community dialogues with trained local facilitators stimulate reflection/questioning on whether social norms are considered harmful, reduce tolerance for exclusionary social norms, and identify positive alternatives to harmful norms and help them gain visibility. Public commitment to abandon harmful and exclusionary norms and practices can involve declarations, oaths, pledges or celebrations, as well as sharing norms using events and media.

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Spread. Support the spread of new social norms and practices beyond the program implementation area. This stage involves broadening norm questioning and facilitating more widespread discussions. People who are promoting a new social norm and practices can be connected to form a critical mass, with their actions publicised through public commitments to new norms. Spread can be horizontal (e.g., where communities advocate for the change to their neighbours – scaling out) and vertical (e.g., amplification through channels such as media and social networks or institutionalising in WASH systems – scaling up).

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Monitor and maintain. While the complexity of social norms change means that causal pathways will not necessarily be clear, there is a need to build evidence about the ways in which shifting norms can contribute to WASH outcomes. Norms are culturally and socially embedded, so program monitoring and evaluation systems must also be contextualised. Clarifying the strategies for influencing norms change should be the first step; that is, determining what norms we are trying to change, why, for whom, where, and how. Monitoring would then track changes in whether (private and public) approval of the norm is decreasing, whether the norm is less "typical" in the reference group (i.e., a growing number of people are not following the norm) and whether sanctions for non-compliance have weakened. Participatory tools can facilitate change and provide data on how social norms influence behaviours (e.g., the number of community dialogues necessary before expectations and behaviours change). Communities themselves could monitor the extent to which the new norm is being upheld and enforced with new rewards or sanctions. Maintenance is needed to keep new norms and practices stable. The emphasis here is on scaling deep to sustain the transformation of norms through continued dialogue and continuing to spread positive norms.

Multi-sector examples of promising practice

Behaviours are held in place by social norms, when there are expectations in a reference group that the behaviour will be adhered to. This section provides an overview of examples with different approaches that aim to shift social norms. Much of the best practice on social norms initiatives derives from programs designed to tackle harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), child, early and forced marriage, and gender-based violence (GBV). Agencies usually adopt a social norms approach within a social and behaviour change communication program.

The examples below focus on the specific social norms being addressed, the mix of stakeholders, and promising practices within initiatives. They illustrate that change happens at various levels: individual (attitude, self-efficacy), community (dialogue, mobilisation and youth initiatives), structural (institutions, services, WASH systems) and social (power, gender). These examples provide insights for WASH actors on mechanisms for change and program design and highlight the need for broader, multi-sectoral initiatives that target specific population groups and overcome the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination (UNICEF, 2021).

School dropout and early marriage

Worldwide, one in five girls marry before their 18th birthday, compared to one in 30 young men (UNICEF, 2019a). Social norms shape a girl's expectations from an early age. She is also affected by her parents', teachers' and society's gendered aspirations, which may reinforce the future reproductive and domestic roles of girls. The decision of some parents to marry off daughters at a young age reflects a range of norms supporting early marriage. Initiatives to increase livelihood skills and economic independence for girls can reduce public acceptance and justification for early marriage and school dropout.

Program spotlight: Champions of Change

Lead: Plan International

Timeframe: 2012–ongoing

Type of norms being addressed: Gender equality, rigid notions of masculinity, girls' education, child marriage, teenage pregnancy, tolerance of gender-based violence, "female" chores or work, norms around sexual and reproductive health, homophobia, and transphobia.

Target/reference group: Young people (aged 14 or 18) are trained as facilitators of groups of youth called Champions of Change (CoC), who become change agents and peer educators for gender equality and girls' rights.

Promising practices: This is Plan International's community-wide strategy for promoting gender equality and social norm change through youth organisation, engagement and peer-to-peer mobilisation. The initiative involves separate but interrelated journeys of change for both boys and girls. Girls focus on self-esteem, rights awareness, collective power and economic empowerment. Boys learn how to avoid contributing to inequality and transform discriminatory attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate imbalances of power. As part of CoC, young people come together to discuss their changing views on gender and social transformation and work together to find solutions for their communities. Plan International has developed a module in the CoC program that helps young people to discuss sexual orientation and gender identity, increase their knowledge about rights, and develop their skills to take a stand for and with LGBTIQ+ young people.

Results: To date, CoC has been implemented across the Plan International federation in over 116 projects or programs in more than 46 countries. Most of these have integrated the CoC component into a broader project, while a few are stand-alone CoC projects.

Source: Plan International (2022)

Violence against women

Initiatives to address social norms around GBV aim at both preventing violence from occurring and stopping it from continuing. Social norms may permit a man to hit his wife or child, and even sanction a man for refusing to do so. Activities that aim to rectify the underlying norms can change the community response to women experiencing violence and highlight how men and boys can take a stand against domestic violence.

Program spotlight: SASA! Activist Kit for Preventing Violence against Women and HIV

Lead: Raising Voices

Timeframe: 2008–ongoing

Type of norms being addressed: Social acceptance of physical violence in relationships among both women and men; SASA! promotes norms such as "non-violent relationships are happier and healthier."

Target/reference group: Couples, families, friends, colleagues, faith communities, and neighbours.

Promising practices: SASA! used four strategies: local activism, media and advocacy - small-scale media and street theatre, as well as influencing public priorities by engaging local leaders, policymakers, and journalists to make new policies and practices designed to end violence against women (VAW) - creative, accessible, and appealing communication materials, and training of community activists with in-depth training modules for use in workshops or short training sessions.

Results: SASA! was associated with significantly lower social acceptance of intimate partner violence among women and men. At the community level, SASA! helped foster a climate of non-tolerance of VAW, by reducing the acceptability of VAW and improving individuals' skills, willingness and sense of responsibility to reduce VAW in their communities.

Sources: Raising Voices (n.d.), Watts et al. (2014)

A female mason lays traditional mudbricks for a wall construction in a rural village, Bhutan
Credit: SNV Bhutan / Tashi Dorji

Vaccination

Campaigns to change social norms on vaccination include multipronged communications approaches encompassing:

- media approaches

- information, education and communication (IEC) materials

- strategies for engaging community influencers and religious leaders, as well as house-to-house mobilisation and mothers' meetings, to correct misconceptions and promote knowledge about vaccines

- use of key community sites such as mosques, schools and religious festivals to generate demand.

Program spotlight: Reducing COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy using behavioural science

Lead: Mind, Behaviour, and Development Unit, World Bank

Timeframe: 2021–ongoing

Countries: The work was initiated in the Middle East and North Africa region, and expanded to 17 countries in 2021 (in all World Bank regions).

Type of norms being addressed: Healthcare worker vaccine hesitancy, exposure to misinformation, youth vaccine hesitancy, and beliefs about new COVID variants.

Target/reference group: People with safety concerns specific to the COVID-19 vaccines or limited knowledge and information about the vaccines.

Promising practices: Social media surveys (using chatbots) and randomised experiments are used to understand people's beliefs about COVID-19 and vaccination intentions. The information is then used to inform the countries' behaviour change communications to reduce vaccine hesitancy. In all, over 140,000 responses about COVID-19 vaccine intentions and behaviours have been collected through 24 social media surveys in 11 languages.

Results: If people receive information on how they are performing against others in their social network, higher vaccination rates can result. An example is: "More and more of your neighbours are getting vaccinated, 10,000 people in your community received their COVID vaccine in the last week, don't miss out! Get your vaccine today", compared to a general messaging that simply states "Get vaccinated!"

Another emerging finding is that messages about vaccine safety are more effective when received from a trusted source. Sending personalised messages on an individuals' specific vaccine concerns increased intention to vaccinate more than generic messaging. The most trusted messengers are healthcare workers and friends/family members. During 2022, the World Bank will build upon these initial lessons to adapt and scale this work to support governments' behaviour change communications to reduce vaccine hesitancy.

Sources: Bidani et al. (2022), Kovacevic et al. (2022)

Changing youth gender norms

Children are socialised into binary-specific gender norms from the time they are born. Girls are typically socialised to do more household roles, be more "helpful", share with others, or wait their turn. Working with young people – when their identities are not yet fixed – can help them to be more gender equitable in future. Initiatives have been designed to encourage children to promote more positive gender roles within their households and communities via peer-led workshops for young people and community events.

Program spotlight: The Choices program

Lead: Save the Children

Location: Siraha district, Nepal

Timeframe: 2009

Type of norms being addressed: Gender norms and to recognise gendered differences and inequality.

Target/reference group: Boys and girls aged 10–14 years.

Promising practices: The Choices curriculum is a three-month program, with eight 2-hour sessions, administered by graduated child club facilitators with basic training. The emotion-based curriculum includes fun and age-appropriate participatory activities designed to stimulate discussion among young adolescents.

Results: Young people were interviewed before and after participating in Choices, and the attitudes of boys and girls were found to be significantly more equitable after participation. Boys and girls were more likely to consider a broad range of household roles, such as washing dishes or sweeping the floor, as gender neutral. Participants rejected the idea of rigid stereotypical gender norms, which they had supported prior to the initiative. While parents did not participate directly in Choices, the results of the parent focus groups suggest that the program encouraged parent–child communication, and exposed parents to new ideas and ways of behaving through their children.

Sources: Institute for Reproductive Health (2011), Save the Children (2009), Lundgren et al. (2013)
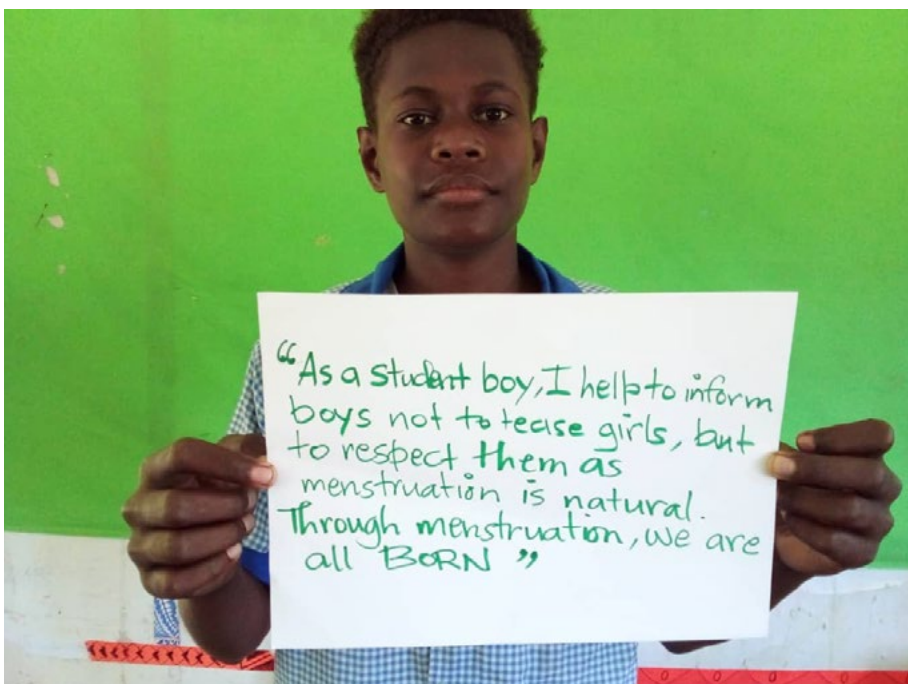
A male student expresses solidarity and support for girls, his fellow students, at a school in New Ireland Province, Papua New Guinea
Credit: Live & Learn Environmental Education Papua New Guinea

Fatherhood-related practices

Social norms initiatives have been implemented to improve men's relationships with their partners, children and families, producing changes in men's attitudes and practices related to parenting. Programs influence ways of thinking about masculinity and fatherhood from a financial "providership" role to a parenting style of increased involvement in the household.

Program spotlight: Bandebereho (role model) couples' initiative

Lead: Rwanda Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC); the program was coordinated by Rutgers WPF and Promundo, funded by the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Country: Rwanda

Timeframe: 2013–ongoing

Type of norms being addressed: Norms that affect men's involvement in maternal and newborn health and caregiving, violence prevention, and couple relations.

Target/reference group: Couples.

Promising practices: RWAMREC is a Rwandan NGO with a mission to mobilise men to support women's leadership, to contribute to the eradication of men's violence against women, and to serve as role models for the promotion of positive masculine behaviours.

During 2013–15, RWAMREC implemented the Bandebereho initiative with more than 1,700 couples in four districts. Men were invited to attend all 15 sessions (maximum 45 hours), and their female partners were invited to participate in up to eight couple sessions (maximum 24 hours). The sessions were facilitated by local fathers who had been trained to implement the sessions with men and couples in their community. More than 3,000 parents were reached in the pilot between March 2014 and July 2015. The curriculum involved critical reflection, dialogue, and participatory activities that support men (and their partners) to adopt more equitable attitudes and behaviour, and learn and practice new skills related to pregnancy, parenting, couple communication and non-violent conflict resolution.

Results: Over 2015–16 a randomised controlled trial was conducted to assess the impact of the Bandebereho program in Rwanda. The findings demonstrated the initiative's impact across a range of outcomes – including improved antenatal care attendance by women and accompaniment by men, greater modern contraceptive use, and reductions in both intimate partner violence and violence against children. Since 2019, the package of activities has been adapted for scale-up and implemented by trained community health workers via the Rwandan health system.

Sources: Doyle et al. (2018), RWAMREC et al. (2021)

Female genital mutilation/cutting

Initiatives that have addressed the social norm for FGM/C have promoted collective abandonment of the practice at community level and sought to change the negative connotations associated with girls who are not cut. Sanctions if a family's daughters do not undergo FGM/C include reputational risk and even ostracism by the wider community, including a refusal to sanction a marriage. Girl clubs have been used to provide a safe learning environment in which girls are taught about their rights, usage of positive terminology to describe the bodies of girls and women, and to highlight the physical dangers of FGM/C.

Program spotlight: Communities Care: Transforming Lives and Preventing Violence Program (CC Program)

Lead: UNICEF and UNFPA

Country: Somalia

Timeframe: 2013–ongoing

Type of norms being addressed: The experience and threat of GBV, including FGM/C, faced by women and girls.

Target/reference group: A range of stakeholders, such as girls and boys, caregivers, elders and religious leaders; health, education and law enforcement service providers; and traditional matrons/birth attendants who perform FGM/C.

Promising practices: Trained local facilitators have run community dialogues about societal expectations and norms that tolerate GBV and silence those who experience it, as well as the health concerns related to FGM/C. The CC Program further supports the community to undertake preventive actions by identifying the roles and responsibilities of different people in keeping girls and women safe and protected. Linked to ongoing community-level dialogue has been the identification of champions for change, both within the CC program and through the work of community-based child protection committees. Champions usually include elders, religious leaders, adolescents (girls and boys), mothers, fathers, and local authorities.

Results: An evaluation of the impact of the CC Program in four districts in Mogadishu (Glass et al., 2019) detected a 14% reduction in norms that support husbands' right to use violence against their wives, a 22% reduction in the acceptance of violence to protect family honour, and an 11% reduction in social norms that support negative responses among family and community members towards those who had experienced sexual violence (UNICEF, 2020). Importantly, participation in the CC Program was associated with an increase in the belief in the helpfulness of services such as health, police, justice and elders.

Sources: UNICEF & UNFPA (2021), UNICEF (2020)

Violence against children

According to the UNICEF report *Hidden in plain sight: A statistical analysis of violence against children* (2016), almost a billion – about half the children in the world – are subjected to regular physical punishment from their caregivers. Widespread acceptability of violent discipline of children shows a need to tackle the social norm and its negative impacts. Boys are especially vulnerable to violence and domestic or school-based punishment. Initiatives to change the norm aim to make parents and caregivers more aware of alternative options for disciplining a child, and support them to become more positively involved in their children's lives in the family and school.

Program spotlight: A multimedia campaign on positive parenting – Awladna (our children)

Lead: National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) in partnership with UNICEF

Country: Egypt

Timeframe: 2018–ongoing

Type of norms being addressed: Acceptability of violence against children.

Target/reference group: Parents, caregivers and parents-to-be.

Promising practices: In Egypt, the Demographic and Health Survey 2014 showed that 93% of children aged 1–14 years were subject to some form of violent disciplinary practices by their parents and/or caregivers. A study by NCCM and UNICEF (2015) revealed parents were the main perpetrators of violence, followed by peers, then teachers.

Awladna has run as three one-month campaigns, reaching millions of parents and caregivers, through public service announcements on TV and radio, SMS, and social media posts engaging celebrities, as well as printed press, outdoor advertising, and direct public interaction. The first phase of the campaign focused on positive parenting under the slogan #CalmNotHarm, and the second phase addressed violence among peers under the slogan #ImAgainstBullying; the third phase tackled positive parenting with a focus on adolescents, building on the hashtag #CalmNotHarm.

Results: The campaign is part of an ongoing national program to end violence against children in Egypt.

Source: UNICEF (2019b)

Children with disabilities

Children with disabilities are among the most marginalised populations. Girls with any form of disability are generally the most vulnerable community members, so it is important to lower the unique barriers that they may face across the life course. Depending on the age of the child with a disability and type of impairment (physical or intellectual), social norms dictate the best place for a child to live – at home, with a foster family or in an institution. If at home, parents might think their family members, community or society would not approve of their child going to school.

Program spotlight: Male mentor scheme

Lead: Leonard Cheshire's Girls' Education Challenge Transition project

Country: Kenya

Timeframe: 2014–ongoing

Type of norms being addressed: Traditional roles (men make decisions in the household) and gender inequalities; norms on educating girls with disabilities, children with disabilities will never succeed or be anything more than a burden; the mother's genes are to blame for a disability; disabled children are a mother's responsibility; girls with disabilities should be married off while very young.

Target/reference group: Leonard Cheshire has set up 50 support groups for parents of children with disabilities. Fathers in the support groups have been trained as male mentors who sensitise other men on the rights and needs of girls with disabilities.

Promising practices: The project identified 250 male mentors – five from each of the 50 support groups. These mentors are caregivers and support inclusive education for girls with disabilities. The mentors reach out to fathers not yet involved and pass on what they have learnt to other fathers in their community. This included:

- how men could help with the education of children with disabilities

- challenging male stereotypes and gender roles

- how men can support their daughters in adolescence

- supporting girls with disabilities in community participation.

Results: 150 men to date have received male mentor training so that they can become role models and advocates for inclusive education within their communities. In one example, a male mentor has taken on more responsibility for his daughter, who has epilepsy. He faced criticism at first from others in the community, reporting "I had people asking me why I am taking up the responsibilities of a female child which should be well taken care of by her mother". He has become a strong advocate for the education of children with disabilities in his community: "Through the training sessions, we were shown that parenting and home responsibilities are not gender based. We all live in a symbiotic environment where we need each other."

Sources: Chebet (2021), Leonard Cheshire (2022)

Sexual orientation or gender identity

In all regions of the world, LGBTIQ+ people who identify as gender non-binary, or are perceived to have sexualities or gender identities that differ from the social norm, often experience discrimination, abandonment and rejection. Toilets segregated by gender implicitly show that there are only two possible forms of gender expression (the norm being gender binarism), and use of these and other facilities by people with diverse gender identities can result in intimidation, harassment and violence.

Program spotlight: Gender-neutral toilets

Lead: Practical Action

Country: Nepal

Timeframe: 2014–16

Type of norms being addressed: Cisnormativity - the assumption that someone's gender identity matches their biological sex, which is often inscribed in law, institutions and social practices - as the norm/desirable social standard; belief that the gender identities of transgender people are inferior; discrimination and violence against transgender people; binary conception of gender that underlies the spaces segregated by gender.

Target/reference group: People who do not fit the binary norms of gender identity; transgender and gender non-binary individuals, those who prohibit the use of toilets by transgender and gender non-binary people according to their gender identities.

Promising practices: In Nepal, gender-segregated facilities include men's toilets (for cisgender men and transgender men), women's toilets (for cisgender women and transgender women), and toilets for individuals who identify as neither men nor women. Practical Action focused on making Gulariya Municipality in Bardiya District open defecation-free through activities including education and provision of improved sanitation facilities. Practical Action and local NGO ENPHO constructed a public toilet in the bazaar, close to the police office and the district hospital. The public toilet was constructed with separate facilities for men and women, and an additional unisex cubicle for those people who prefer not to use men's or women's facilities.

Results: Improved access to the toilet without the fear of being embarrassed or expelled due to one's gender identity. For some individuals, the provision of unisex facilities was important not only for their access to sanitation, but for the public recognition and affirmation of their identity and existence.

Source: Boyce et al. (2018)

Norms change work across Water for Women

This section reviews the experience of exclusionary and harmful norms and initiatives to shift them within Water for Women projects. Partners have employed diverse approaches, ranging from support to meet practical WASH needs to those that ensure meaningful participation of disadvantaged people in WASH planning and decision-making. All projects have engagement activities for women and girls and people with disabilities. Specific projects identify and work with some of society's most marginalised groups, such as ethnic minorities, caste groups and people from SGM communities. After identifying marginalised groups, partners tailored their approaches to diverse groups, including software and hardware initiatives and partnerships with RHOs, to better understand their needs and priorities.

Approaches and strategies for social norms change

Water for Women projects use a range of mechanisms for effecting change - such as influencing and advocacy, promoting positive role models, peer support, and awareness raising - and have a mix of strategies that include activities and outputs at multiple levels, such as:

> toolkits or training manuals for interpersonal outreach and small group work and training

> working directly within institutions such as schools or workplaces

> participatory activities or community mobilisation (e.g., community mapping or participatory theatre, discussion points for religious leaders or community volunteers)

> engaging with duty bearers to be socially transformative leaders

> engaging with RHOs to support norms change in contextually appropriate ways

> positive role models, such as the head teacher at a school in Solomon Islands who wants to be a male champion for menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) in his school through Plan International's Water for Women project.

Most Water for Women projects were not explicitly designed with social norms theory in mind, and therefore may not be measuring changes in social norms directly. Nevertheless, the examples included here highlight strategies and approaches that have the potential to change norms, and as such, offer important lessons for further work on social norms in WASH programs. Although these projects are in various stages of implementation, they provide interesting examples of what WASH programming and services can look like when they do not reinforce limiting beliefs and expectations about women, girls and other marginalised groups.

Examples of behaviours perpetuated by social norms

The examples in this section illustrate diverse programmatic approaches on how to work with people from SGM communities and age groups, as well as people with disabilities, in an intentional and mutually reinforcing way to shift social norms that are considered exclusionary and harmful, whilst improving access to WASH. The practical WASH needs of women and girls can be an entry point for changing social norms. Examples are presented in this section, according to the norm being addressed in each initiative.

Norms around women and girls

Water for Women projects begin by assessing the needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls, then identifying constructive ways to engage people of all genders in efforts to meet needs and reduce vulnerabilities.

Example norm: Menstruation can be shameful for women and girls

In some countries, social norms prevent women from admitting they are menstruating, being seen carrying or washing and drying menstrual materials, or leaving menstrual blood visible on toilets. Women and girls often voice shame related to menstruation behaviours and experiences, such as being unable to use sanitation facilities or touch water when menstruating. Norms mean women (including mothers) may think it is right for girls not to attend temples or school while on their period, and encourage sanctions for girls if they do.

In reality, women and girls need to use sanitation facilities more frequently when menstruating. Women may convince husbands to invest in onsite sanitation to avoid the need to use public WASH facilities and to prevent daughters from experiencing sanitation-related sexual assault, thereby also protecting their reputations (and the family's status). CSOs such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC) are tacking these taboos; their Leveraging Inclusive WASH for Empowerment project in three districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan, provides MHH training sessions for girls and for women with disabilities.

Water for Women project spotlight: MHH in rural Solomon Islands

Lead: Plan International

Country: Solomon Islands

Type of norms being addressed: Menstrual health is a private matter and women should deal with menstruation in silence, which perpetuates harmful myths, restricts women's movements, and suppresses understanding of sexual and reproductive health.

Target/reference group: Rural communities, Plan and Live & Learn Environmental Education in collaboration with Solomon Islands social enterprise, MJ Enterprise, and provincial health staff.

Promising practice: Implementation of a Menstrual Health Facilitators Guide in 10 communities and two schools, with targeted activities segregated by age and sex, provided small and safe environments for learning about menstruation, dismantling common myths and stigma, basic sexual and reproductive health, and sanitary materials. A menstrual health campaign involved stickers, posters, and billboards on a main road.

Do No Harm: Pre-awareness community outreach work, including briefings provided by project staff and provincial nurses, can be an icebreaker and diffuse any tension ahead of the formal program activities.

Results: Community members have improved their knowledge and understanding about menstruation, hygienic management, and products available in the market. Women felt more empowered to talk about menstrual health with their own daughters and their intimate partners.

Every woman and girl should be able to manage their period safely, hygienically and with dignity.

An illustration from the Menstrual Health Facilitators Guide, produced through Plan International Australia's Water for Women project, New Times, New Targets
Credit: Live & Learn Environmental Education / Nick Mattiske

Example norm: Menstruation is a private issue for women

Menstrual taboos are prevalent worldwide. Through the Water for Women supported [Laetem Dak Kona](#) project, World Vision Vanuatu engaged men and boys to support MHH initiatives in their community, not only to improve the lives of women and girls, but to support caregivers of women and girls with disabilities.

Training for men and boys dispelled common taboos and myths that prevent women's participation in community activities during menstruation. Staff in the Department of Water Resources, a male-dominated department, were also trained. Men and boys who have undergone the training have better understanding of the harm that can result from menstrual myths and taboos, and the importance of creating safe spaces for both men and women to learn and talk openly about menstrual health issues.

Norms around men and boys

Programs start with men and boys to deconstruct harmful gender norms, then expand this work to engage all genders.

Example norm: Only men attend community WASH meetings on behalf of the household

Restrictive social norms regarding women's capacity, movement and roles have limited women's attendance and participation in water governance. Women and girls are often excluded from community decision-making due to patriarchal norms. Male partners or men in leadership roles might discourage their wives and daughters from attending community WASH meetings or ignore women's role in decision-making and public participation related to WASH. Women themselves might believe men are better suited for WASH leadership roles.

In some places, norms prevent women from speaking or sitting with men in public or prevent them from speaking in front of men. Separate men's and women's sanitation meetings may be held for men and women for this reason. There may be a lack of respect for or interest in women's opinions, or sanctions for men if their female family members participate in WASH-related public life. Women themselves could be punished for violating these norms – beaten, gossiped about, or assumed to be neglecting children and household responsibilities.

Where traditional gender norms greatly constrain women's, girls' and transgender women's involvement in public spheres, life skill-building sessions are culturally accepted entry points to increase participation. IRC implements Water for Women's [Leveraging Inclusive WASH for Empowerment](#) project in Pakistan, providing life skill sessions to women and girls via participatory learning and action modules. If heavy domestic workloads prevent participation, practical adjustments are made to project activities such as providing childcare and holding meetings when women can attend.

A primary school Headmaster discusses sanitary pads with project staff and students in West Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands
Credit: Plan International Australia and Live & Learn Environmental Education

Water for Women project spotlight: Redistribute power within community WASH governance structures

Lead: Habitat for Humanity

Country: Fiji

Type of norms being addressed: Decision-making is patriarchal; entrenched gender stereotypes, including women's role as primary caregiver and men's role as leader/authority figure, serve to restrict women's capacity outside the domestic sphere.

Target/reference group: Gatekeepers and traditional (male) leaders, women, water committee members, community WASH governance structures (including traditional leaders) and others that limit the participation of women – and other marginalised groups, including SGM communities – in decision making structures.

Do No Harm: Women-only safe spaces enable women to reflect on their participation in WASH activities and identify challenges and ways forward to strengthen their inclusion in WASH governance structures.

Promising practices: While women may be members of a water committee, their role is often tokenistic (e.g., serving tea). Women do not take part in decision-making that concerns their WASH needs and those of their families. Representation and agency of women in decision-making and attitudes towards women in these spaces are linked.

Promising practices include participatory methodologies that engage project participants in meaningful reflection about key issues. Trained facilitators conduct sessions involving activities and tools such as the Pacific Community Water Management Strong Water Committees story, WASH Power Walk, 24-hour Clock, and Influence in Decision-Making. Gender voting allows project staff to monitor any changes in attitudes and practices among men, traditional leaders, and water committee leaders towards women's participation in WASH activities and WASH governance structures. Women have taken on management positions within water committees and are now involved in WASH monitoring and decision-making. Male leaders (village heads) have advocated to support women to attain and fulfil these management positions.

Results: In Tuvavatu settlement in Ra province, community mapping revealed that women had much expertise and experience in managing water issues for their families and other households that were often overlooked by the water committee. Women demonstrated the WASH knowledge and skills that would be useful to water committee meetings and their participation would improve the functioning of the committees.

Men in Nasoqo village, Ba province, Fiji, engaging in a 24-hour Clock activity
Credit: Habitat for Humanity Fiji

Example norm: Unpaid WASH work is a woman's responsibility

Parents, caregivers, and families often inadvertently perpetuate discriminatory gender norms through messages and methods of care for girls, boys and people from SGM communities. Women's WASH burden and issues of marginalisation are compounded by lack of voice, education and economic opportunities. Water collection or cleaning toilets is typically considered women's work, which is less socially valued and thereby contributes to women's lower status in society. There may be sanctions for men and boys that attempt to share these responsibilities.

To break gender barriers and promote positive gender socialisation in the early years, WASH project activities have supported ways to engage fathers and male caregivers in questioning and challenging traditional gender norms, and promote positive change in equal parenting, sharing of household responsibilities and caregiving practices. Some projects have shifted norms and expectations more broadly; for instance, WASH projects in Vanuatu resulted in men increasingly assisting with responsibilities like cooking. However, some women are concerned about greater men's involvement in what are considered to be women's activities, fearful that this may lead to men further controlling their spaces and reducing their autonomy.

Water for Women project spotlight: Unlocking a feminist-led economic recovery to COVID-19

Lead: SNV Netherlands Development Organisation

Country: Nepal

Type of norms being addressed: Gendered care and domestic work norms in WASH programs.

Target/reference group: Entrepreneurs and local/national government partners within the WASH sector of Nepal, along with CSO representatives; broader users are envisioned as Fund partners, WASH and GEDSI practitioners, local and international CSOs and RHOs.

Promising practices: The research explores the "shock" of COVID-19, its gendered impacts, and the potential for these to open space for gendered economic and attitudinal changes.

Do No Harm: SNV Nepal has developed a Do No Harm approach to predict, mitigate and prevent harm caused to vulnerable groups by staff in all activities. All project and partner staff are sensitised on Do No Harm principles and trained to identify challenges. The project has included Do No Harm principles in operational strategies and guidelines and linked these to capacity strengthening and programming.

Results: SNV's research provides WASH and GEDSI practitioners, service providers and policymakers with evidence of practical and effective responses to pandemic-driven care work shifts, and identifies opportunities (and challenges) to shift gender norms within WASH program interventions to realise a more inclusive economic recovery.

User-friendly outputs provide guidance on:

- indicative impacts of COVID-19 on care and domestic work arrangements in different populations

- how to develop a transformative initiative to reduce care and domestic work inequalities

- key policy and program implications for changing gendered care and domestic work norms in WASH programs.

Source: Water for Women (2021)

Example norm: Husbands should not allow wives/daughters to work outside the home

WASH enterprises can increase women's economic empowerment. However, norms related to women's freedom of movement and household roles make their engagement in WASH enterprises difficult. Social norms might encourage husbands to prevent their wives from working outside the home, and there can be social consequences for men whose wives do this.

Water for Women projects have included support to businesses led by women, including those with disabilities. IRC Pakistan supported female entrepreneurs to empower themselves economically by providing entrepreneur kits and linking them with markets to expand their businesses and live independently. They also provided soap-making training to women's committee members.

Water for Women project spotlight: Building capacity and confidence of women-led sanitation entrepreneurs

Lead: SNV Netherlands Development Organisation

Country: Lao People's Democratic Republic

Type of norms being addressed: Attitudes and/or self-perceptions related to gender, disabilities, and inclusion.

Target/reference group: Small-scale women-led enterprises that produce concrete rings (for constructing latrines) and serve walk-in customers, but have poor knowledge of the market size, customer base, consumer preferences and affordability.

Promising practices: Technical support included training, coaching and mentoring to the women-led enterprises, including attending a community-led total sanitation triggering session to understand their potential customers, their needs and preferences, and the market size (number of households that need to build toilets) in their areas; tools for costing for different market segments, tracking monthly sales and calculating profit; informed choice catalogues and promotional materials; ideas to broaden their scope of services; and promotional packages to encourage group sales.

Do No Harm: SNV Lao PDR undertook a Do No Harm assessment and developed a checklist for advisors and project teams. The project also integrated learning from seven studies of gender equality and WASH projects that found that women face gender challenges in starting up, maintaining and growing businesses. Strategies have been tested with women entrepreneurs, including working with business owners as couples to build greater respect for women's work and leadership and promote equitable decision-making, and sharing care responsibilities in the home.

"I started the business with my husband since 2005, but we broke up in 2017. Most people around me did not believe I could carry on the business without my husband. I struggled a little at the beginning but did not give up. I was very happy to receive support from the project and district government. I learnt many new things and the sale has been increasing recently. Now I can show them that I can manage the business even better than the past. Finally, everyone in my village has accepted my ability."

Female sanitation promoter, Champone district, Lao PDR

Results: Women have learnt how to manage their businesses better and connect to their customers through local authorities and sanitation promoters based in the community.

A female sanitation promoter in Champhone District, Lao PDR, explains the importance of a safe toilet   Credit: SNV Lao PDR / Outhikone Souphome In

Example norm: Domestic violence is a private family matter - women should tolerate violence in silence and bystanders should not intervene

Most forms of GBV are based on the belief that girls and women do not have rights or agency, while violence is considered a legitimate expression of masculinity. In GBV programs more broadly, knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) studies have been used to assess whether people think it is right for husbands to hit their wives or threaten women with sexual violence, as well as to assess what would happen to a man who did not hit his wife or children. WASH can also be an entry point for shared goals, such as women's safety and reducing GBV. Some Water for Women projects have reported a decline in the proportion of individuals who felt that women facing violence should remain silent, and that a woman taking action brings shame to the family.

Example norm: Men should make all WASH decisions in the household

Most people in the community may think it is right for men to make the WASH (and financial) decisions in the household; there may be public and private sanctions if a wife takes charge. Men who help their partners or share responsibilities go against traditional norms and could experience ridicule or backlash (from both men and women). Some women may also be concerned about men's capacity to engage in what are considered to be women's activities.

Water for Women project spotlight: More men caring about care

Lead: World Vision

Country: Bangladesh

Type of norms being addressed: Care work in the household is a woman's responsibility.

Target/reference group: Modules are designed to equip men with practical knowledge and alternatives to rigid and inequitable versions of masculinity.

Promising practices: The SHOMOTA project applies the MenCare approach, a group education model working with 10 couples in group sessions over six months. Sessions focus on the benefits of shared decision-making around household budgeting and investment, and the equal spousal division of caregiving and domestic tasks. The modules aim to build men's and women's active listening skills, and establish and maintain respectful communication. In addition, courtyard sessions with men and adolescent boys aim to sensitise and mobilise these groups towards playing a positive role for promoting MHH.

Do No Harm: The modules aim to build peaceful relationships through conflict resolution and non-violence techniques, and to reject GBV and associated harmful practices.

Results: To date, the project has worked with 360 couples (720 participants). Many now report men contributing more to household labour, water collection and storage, cleaning of household toilets, sweeping courtyards, and assisting children with handwashing. Men are taking a more proactive role in installing handwashing facilities in their households after being targeted in hygiene promotion activities. Women reported making decisions about the construction of toilets and purchasing hygiene products. Stigma and taboo associated with menstruation is strong in Bangladesh; engaging men on this issue is shifting some of these taboos among the couples involved.

A husband shares the housework with his wife
Credit: World Vision Bangladesh / Nilima Das

Norms around people with disabilities

Ableism views people with disabilities as in need of help; this undermines the person's autonomy and can exacerbate discriminatory treatment and exclusion. The slogan "nothing about us without us" cannot be realised without participation of people with disabilities in WASH programs. Integrating the voices and perspectives of people with disabilities into programming efforts is likely to lead to more effective and accessible programs. Water for Women projects have worked with people with disabilities and RHOs to combat harmful social norms, and then expand this work to engage all abilities.

Example norm: People with disabilities add no value to community WASH meetings

Depending on the type of impairment (physical or intellectual), discriminatory social norms determine the extent to which people with disabilities can participate in public life. Community leaders may disapprove of people with disabilities attending meetings, and family, neighbours and friends may discourage attendance or else not invite people with disabilities to attend. In addition to social barriers, meetings may be held in inaccessible places or lack access to inclusive WASH facilities. If they do attend community meetings, people with disabilities may not be listened to, or otherwise prevented from influencing decisions. Women and girls with disabilities experience social norms (based on their gender and disability) that leave them vulnerable to violence and less likely to be able to speak up.

Water for Women is helping to change attitudes towards people with disabilities. Engaging with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), inviting people with disabilities to community events as both facilitators and participants, building confidence to contribute meaningfully to WASH activities, and formalising involvement of people with disabilities in WASH committees is modelling inclusion to the wider community. Projects have also attempted to remove physical barriers to the use of public spaces, including where WASH decision-making forums are held.

Water for Women Project spotlight: Leadership for Change (LfC) initiative

Lead: SNV Netherlands Development Agency

Country: Bhutan

Type of norms being addressed: Lack of women's leadership within the sanitation sector of Bhutan.

Target/reference group: Government (at national and local levels), women with disabilities from CSOs (e.g., Disability Persons Association of Bhutan), members of youth group She Decides, members from Rainbow Bhutan (a local SGM network) and HeForShe champions within the sector, together with the National Commission for Women and Children.

Promising practices: SNV Bhutan's Water for Women supported LfC initiative partners with a local women's organisation to encourage transformative leadership, including identifying and building confidence of male HeforShe champions, preparing people with disabilities to contribute meaningfully to national WASH workshops, and specific training on gender and inclusion for local decision-makers. It invests in women's leadership skills, and supports women's networks and increased women's voice and influence in WASH decision-making, including within formal systems and institutions. LfC aims to highlight the sanitation and hygiene needs of people with disabilities and from SGM communities in WASH decision-making forums at the national level, and develop positive role models to encourage change in others. Coaching and mentoring is also provided by the Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (a women's organisation).

Do No Harm: LfC provides a safe spaces where women can try out new ways of leadership under the guidance of skilled facilitators.

Results: A survey was used to measure changes in the KAP of participants towards female leadership for change over the course of the LfC initiative. The project increased acceptance and support for gender equality in the national WASH sector. At the end of each targeted LfC workshop, participants drew up action plans that will be monitored and followed up.

Women participate in WASH entrepreneur training through SNV in Bhutan

Example norm: People with disabilities are not equally entitled to access household, institutional and public WASH services

Norms may mean some people (men, wage earners or sons) have prioritised access to water within the household. Family members might think it is right to deny people with disabilities sufficient water for drinking or bathing, especially if they need support to use sanitation/bathing facilities or if water supplies are limited.

Water for Women projects have consulted with people with disabilities and OPDs on universal designs for WASH facilities, building new facilities or rehabilitating or upgrading existing facilities, and provided assistive devices (such as wheelchairs or walking frames) to improve WASH access for people with disabilities. Facilitating independent use of WASH facilities challenges social norms that depict people with disabilities as dependent or helpless.

In Nepal, with SNV support, Sarlahi Municipality allocated specific budget for MHH for women with disabilities. Adjustments to project activities include providing behaviour change communications and IEC materials in a range of formats to accommodate people with different disabilities and educational levels. In Vanuatu, World Vision facilitates the participation of women and people with disabilities in training through community mobilisation to ensure their inputs into drinking water safety and security planning, which has led to changes in how WASH services are designed and provided.

Example norm: Sexual and gender minority communities should not be visible at community meetings and therefore should not take on leadership roles

Globally, WASH programs are typically oriented toward heteronormative (male and female) couples and family units and cisgender people. Water for Women projects have focused on norms that discourage people from SGM communities from attending community meetings or taking leadership roles on WASH. Activities include planning and implementation led by transgender people, as well as working with RHOs for trans-inclusive workspaces and toilets in India. Men and women in intimate relationships can perpetuate rigid and harmful gender norms, but such roles can also be part of LGBTIQ+ relationships. Thus, projects should facilitate people in SGM communities to deconstruct norms on gender roles too.

Water for Women project spotlight: Moving from the margins to the mainstream and social inclusion

Lead: Centre for Advocacy and Research

Country: India

Type of norms being addressed: Transgender persons and groups are excluded from WASH policy, programs and services, including community WASH meetings; a rigid gender division of labour, abilities and privileges, tolerance, and acceptance of discrimination.

Target/reference group: Transgender persons/groups living in slums in Bhubaneswar, neighbourhood, community, government and private partners, Water Corporation of Odisha, East Coast Railway, Department of Education and Revenue.

Promising practices: Through the Water for Women supported project, CFAR enabled the transgender RHO SAKHA to set up and manage a mini Single Window Forum[1] called Paribartan ("change") to fast-track access to social entitlements. A baseline study was performed and findings disseminated in a meeting organised by CFAR in 2019.

Do No Harm: Collaboration with transgender RHOs to provide support and guidance.

Results: Recognition of the rights of transgender people and entitlement to all basic WASH and related services; inclusion of transgender people as Jaga Fellows (Jaga means "place", and Odisha Jaga Mission translates as "Odisha Liveable Habitat Mission") and the initiation of transgender-led planning and implementation. Government and private partners, Water Corporation of Odisha, East Coast Railway, Department of Education and Revenue, and Esplanade Mall have all expressed support for trans-inclusive workspaces and toilets.

Members of SAKHA, an Odisha-based transgender community rights organisation, lead a World Toilet Day march in Bhubaneswar, India   Credit: CFAR

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[1] Single Window Forums are a consultative mechanism used by CFAR to strengthen collaboration between community, civil society networks, local authorities, service providers and stakeholders to support the delivery of inclusive WASH services for the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in urban settlements of Bhubaneswar and Jaipur.

Personal and organisational change

WASH staff and partners may themselves hold ableist or fixed gendered ideologies. Through Water for Women partnerships, CSOs have strengthened their personal, professional and organisational capacity to address WASH through gender equality and diversity approaches, both at community levels and in WASH systems. Notably, one project recruited a transgender person and a person with a disability, which has shifted employees' attitudes and promoted a more GEDSI-friendly workplace.

Example norm: Stereotyped gender and ableist portrayals in programs

Attention to social norms magnifies the importance of images in WASH messages. For instance, there is a risk of further harm/greater workloads to women if portrayed as the primary caregiver (the Good Mother) and therefore having primary responsibility for hygiene solutions and care. Water for Women CSOs partners have taken steps to ensure their IEC messages, including social media messages, avoid the use of stereotypical tropes and do not reinforce harmful social norms. For instance, World Vision Vanuatu, among others, uses positive portrayals of people with disabilities.

Water for Women project spotlight: Inclusive WASH for Wewak District, Papua New Guinea

Lead: WaterAid

Location: Wewak District, East Sepik Province, PNG

Type of norms being addressed: Norms that prevent the participation of women and people with disabilities in decision-making forums, for example exclusion of women and people with disabilities, people with disabilities not being regarded as capable of decision-making and leadership, and women and people with disabilities not having power or being regarded as legitimate WASH partners.

Target/reference group: Members of the District WASH Committee, government and private sector stakeholders in WASH governance and service delivery.

Promising practices: At the provincial level, WaterAid PNG supports representation from the East Sepik Council of Women (ESCOW) and the East Sepik Disabled People's Association (ESDPA) on the District WASH Committee. These RHO partners have been active advisers within the committee, contributing to decisions about the WASH system and service delivery throughout the project. The District WASH Plan has specific provisions on inclusive WASH and both organisations collaborate with government to implement them.

Do No Harm: ESCOW provides a violence referral pathway and information to prevent and respond to GBV, while ESDPA links people with disabilities to services.

Results: Following the recommendations from baseline research to document GEDSI issues in the province, ESCOW and ESDPA have permanent roles on the District WASH Committee, where they raise awareness and inform the District WASH Plan's specific provisions on inclusive WASH. Women and people with disabilities are now benefiting from safe water and sharing information on hygiene and healthy living.

Community members who live with disabilities in Wewak District, Papua New Guinea
Credit: WaterAid PNG

Example norm: Paid roles in the WASH sector are for men

Exclusionary and harmful social norms exist, even in those organisations with a mandate to work towards the elimination of such discrimination. Social norms make certain jobs (such as plumbing) or skilled technical WASH training acceptable for men, whereas technical work is not considered appropriate for women.

Through Water for Women, CSOs have supported more women, people with disabilities and people from SGM communities to work in the WASH sector. There are examples of professional development of female staff at community level and in WASH systems, including Feto Asaun ba Sustentabilidade (Women Action for Sustainability), WaterAid's partner in Timor-Leste, developing women's facilitation skills as well as their technical WASH expertise and leadership. SNV Bhutan's LfC initiative partners with a local women's organisation to encourage transformative leadership, including identifying and building confidence of male HeforShe champions. SNV Bhutan has also run a program to train women in masonry to support female-led sanitation businesses, and engaged them as part of the LfC program. The Thrive Networks/East Meets West Foundation Women-Led Output Based Aid water connection approach has seen female-led operations connecting piped water supplies to poor households in target provinces in Cambodia. This business model includes capacity development for female-led water operators in water management and finance, and leadership on water committees. iDE and SHE investments in Cambodia have supported a female-led entrepreneurship capacity-building program and women sanitation business incubation program, which helped to build skills (including in business), as well as improve their income and savings.

Projects have improved the gender equality and social norms capacity of staff or front-line workers through training and self-assessment frameworks. One tool to support reflection on norms within WASH agencies is the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Self-Assessment Tool Facilitation Guide for WASH project managers, researchers, and self-assessment facilitators, developed by Water for Women and the Sanitation Learning Hub.

Water for Women project spotlight: Strengthening the capacity and awareness of WASH actors on gender and power issues

Lead: WaterAid and CARE International

Country: Timor-Leste

Type of norms being addressed: Acceptance of a rigid gender division of labour, abilities and privileges; tolerance and acceptance of violence against women and girls; men are better leaders and decision-makers.

Target/reference group: WASH government actors – both municipality and state administration staff – and other WASH partners.

Promising practices: With the aim to change harmful social norms and behaviours and strengthen gender equality outcomes through capacity strengthening, mentoring, learning and resource development, CARE designed a series of training modules on gender equality and social inclusion and engaging men and boys. Under this project CARE applied Social Analysis and Action, a facilitated process through which individuals explored and challenged the social norms, beliefs and practices that shape their lives. The training targeted municipal and national government WASH staff to improve their understanding of gender, disability, social inclusion and GBV. Modules included topics such as exploring power and privilege, understanding unpaid work, sexual identities, stereotypes, and reducing GBV.

Do No Harm: The assessment highlighted the need to create separate training for male WASH staff in decision-making positions, because often female staff were sent to gender training regardless of their decision-making responsibilities.

Results: By the end of the training, both government and partner WASH staff had increased their skills in incorporating gender and social inclusion into planning for WASH facilities. For example, the number of government staff who knew how to consult with NGOs, women's groups, groups representing SGM communities and people with disabilities increased. More national government staff considered gender equality to be relevant to their work, and more knew how to increase the number of women and people with disabilities expected to benefit from planned WASH facilities.

The Chief of a community Water User Group (GMF) in Liquiçá municipality, Timor-Leste, inspects water pipes   Credit: WaterAid Timor-Leste

Do No Harm: Strategies to assess risk and mitigate backlash

Initiatives that challenge social norms or gender roles are likely to face resistance, making assessing risks and mitigating backlash important. Backlash might include ridicule or reputational risk for men who engage with WASH activities, in some cases from other men or women unhappy with these progressive changes in gender roles. Backlash can also take the form of increased violence against women and people from other marginalised groups when norms are challenged.

Strategies used in the Water for Women projects to reduce resistance include ensuring facilitators are trained to be gender equitable and modify their own attitudes and behaviours. Staff are then trained to use tools such as community dialogue, so they can help participants to express their views in respectful ways. Community mobilisers also need skills to create safe, respectful and supportive spaces that enable exploration of specific social norms. Notably, initiatives designed to prevent violence are likely to increase the numbers of women and girls seeking help, so linking WASH programs to referral pathways such as counselling, health, security and justice services, and child protection authorities are vital to improve safety. Particular attention to Do No Harm is needed when monitoring change for extremely marginalised groups such as people from SGM communities. Whilst CSOs have safeguarding measures in place (such as a code of conduct), partnerships with RHOs are a key way that WASH agencies can build their capacity to assess risk in relation to specific social norms and to mitigate backlash against their organisational practices.

Water for Women project spotlight: Strengthening the reach and messaging of a GBV referral network

Lead: WaterAid

Country: Papua New Guinea

Type of norms being addressed: Rigid notions of masculinity, traditional gender roles and responsibilities, acceptability of GBV and violence against children.

Target/reference group: Survivors of violence, women and men in communities.

Promising practices: Through the Inclusive WASH for Wewak project, WaterAid assists with incorporating gender awareness messaging into community activities as part of the Healthy Islands trainings, COVID awareness sessions and soap-making workshops. These activities reach women and men who would otherwise not be reached. An existing family violence services referral pathway (including emergency accommodation and counselling) has been supported to extend its reach to communities.

Do No Harm: WaterAid partners with ESCOW, a violence prevention and response service provider, to lead these awareness sessions and referral pathways. Its expertise ensures this is done safely and confidentially, thus minimising risks of backlash or harm.

Results: Referral pathways have been strengthened through counselling and housing women temporarily, referring them to the courts through the village magistrate, or to the police. The numbers of survivors seeking and receiving services/assistance has increased, which ESCOW attributes partly to referrals through the Healthy Islands trainings and COVID awareness sessions since July 2019.

Monitoring and reflecting on change

Changing social norms is an emergent area of learning for Water for Women. There is some evidence through Water for Women projects that exclusionary and harmful social norms underlying WASH-related practice are changing. CSOs are already collecting disaggregated data, usually through household surveys, and some have supported partners to build their capacity to collect and analyse sex, age and disability data. For instance, in Vanuatu the National Statistics Office has built its capacity on disaggregated data collection/analysis through participation in World Vision's Water, Women, Disability study. In addition, Water for Women partners have found that better, more up-to-date disability-inclusion data can improve programming. Closer collaboration with local OPDs in research teams in Cambodia and elsewhere has not only improved the quality of data collected, but supported change in staff perceptions about people with disabilities and their caregivers. Collaboration between the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, WaterAid and the Cambodia Disabled People's Organisation strengthened the capacity of all partners to integrate findings into their advocacy, research and programming work.

In addition to gender and power analysis, social norms change can be measured through dialogue with staff and stakeholders. Monitoring using Plan's Gender and WASH Monitoring Tool (GWMT) in projects has revealed qualitative changes: some men exposed to these projects talked about building respect in relationships, change in male gender roles and support for equality. In some projects, women also reported changes in their relationships with men, including increased autonomy in decision-making, greater partner appreciation of their household contribution, improved household communication, and better partner relationships overall. Participation in WASH projects was also associated with more self-confidence among women, more progressive social norms among both men and women, and higher levels of participation in collective action by women. While acknowledging the limitations of self-reported data, these kinds of changes in attitudes and behaviours in the short-term can be proxy indicators for longer-term change in social norms.

Water for Women project spotlight: Gender and WASH Monitoring Tool

Lead: Plan International

Country: Solomon Islands

Type of norms being addressed: Rigid notions of masculinity, gender roles and responsibilities, unequal distribution of household WASH labour, low decision-making power of women in community forums in a public setting.

Target/reference group: Community members (both men and women), government, and other stakeholders.

Promising practices: The GWMT is conducted by project field staff in collaboration with gender specialists from GEDSI-focused organisations and Solomon Islands government ministries. The process engages 30–50 community members – youth, elderly people, and men and women. A facilitated discussion and participatory activities allow participants to share experiences and opinions about WASH in their household or community, who conducts specific WASH tasks or decisions, how long they take, and how frequently they are done.

Do No Harm: The GWMT structure has been revised to minimise the potential for adverse impacts arising from discussion of gender relations. Challenging gender discussions may arise in community meetings, and it is important to facilitate them in a way that maintains a safe and respectful space. Facilitators must also stick to the questions in the GWMT which are designed to ensure they do no harm.

Results: In Tasiloki village, in Guadalcanal province, the tool showed that middle-aged women spent the most time on WASH-related work. This is because people see WASH-related activities as a female's job, and therefore tend to let the female do the washing, cooking, and cleaning. At the community level, men have control of decisions, and women reported little consultation and engagement. Acknowledging inequality is a critical first step in creating gender transformation, and the community aspired "to ensure household WASH-related chores is everyone's responsibilities".

Women discuss gender dynamics in their community and households during implementation of the GWMT in Solomon Islands
Credit: Live & Learn Environmental Education

Like the GWMT, the Gender Equality and Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) is a means of facilitating reflection on change processes (including change in social norms). The SAT can guide reflection on professional practice to strengthen GEDSI in WASH programming and research, as well as in organisations. Similarly, the qualKit, developed by the University of Sydney's Institute for Sustainable Futures (UTS-ISF), provides a set of qualitative MEL tools including visual approaches (e.g., photovoice, card sorting) that aims to support reflexivity in participants on GEDSI-related change in WASH programs. The WASH Gender Equality Measure (WASH-GEM – see below) is a quantitative complement to these qualitative tools. It can be used for defining, measuring, and monitoring norms change and commitment to behaviour change.

Women gather in Islampur Upazila, Jamalpur, Bangladesh for an International Women's Day event

Credit: World Vision Bangladesh / Jobayer Hossain

Water for Women project spotlight: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Gender Equality Measure

Lead: University of Technology Sydney – Institute for Sustainable Futures, with iDE and SNV

Countries: Piloted in Cambodia and Nepal (through Water for Women), and implemented more recently in Ghana, Bhutan and Lao PDR.

Type of norms being addressed: As a multidimensional measure, the WASH-GEM is designed to target a breadth of gender norms at the household and community levels related to WASH and other aspects of life such as gendered division of labour, decision-making and patriarchal societal norms and mobility.

Target/reference group: The WASH-GEM focuses on both women and men and overall gender dynamics.

Promising practices: The WASH-GEM is a quantitative tool co-produced by researchers and practitioners with Water for Women funding. The tool facilitates investigation of changes in gender equality through WASH programming. The WASH-GEM uses five domains of change – Resources, Agency, Critical Consciousness, Structures, and Wellbeing – that were identified through a critical literature review and engagement with practitioners and specialists. It can be used as a diagnostic tool on social norms and is intended to be used over time to understand changes associated with a program.

Do No Harm: The WASH-GEM has been designed to ensure a Do No Harm approach when discussing gender and other sensitive issues, and guidance is provided on ethics and Do No Harm strategies for users.

Results: In the pilot, which focused on Water for Women projects in Cambodia (through iDE) and Nepal (through SNV), the WASH-GEM was used to understand the differences in women's and men's experiences and perspectives in relation to gendered aspects of WASH and gender equality more broadly, and to provide a basis for addressing and informing changes in practice. The results were used to identify priorities and key actions that CSOs can take at the program level to improve gender equality.

Sources: Gonzalez, D. et al. (2022), Carrard, N. et al. (2022), UTS-ISF (2022)
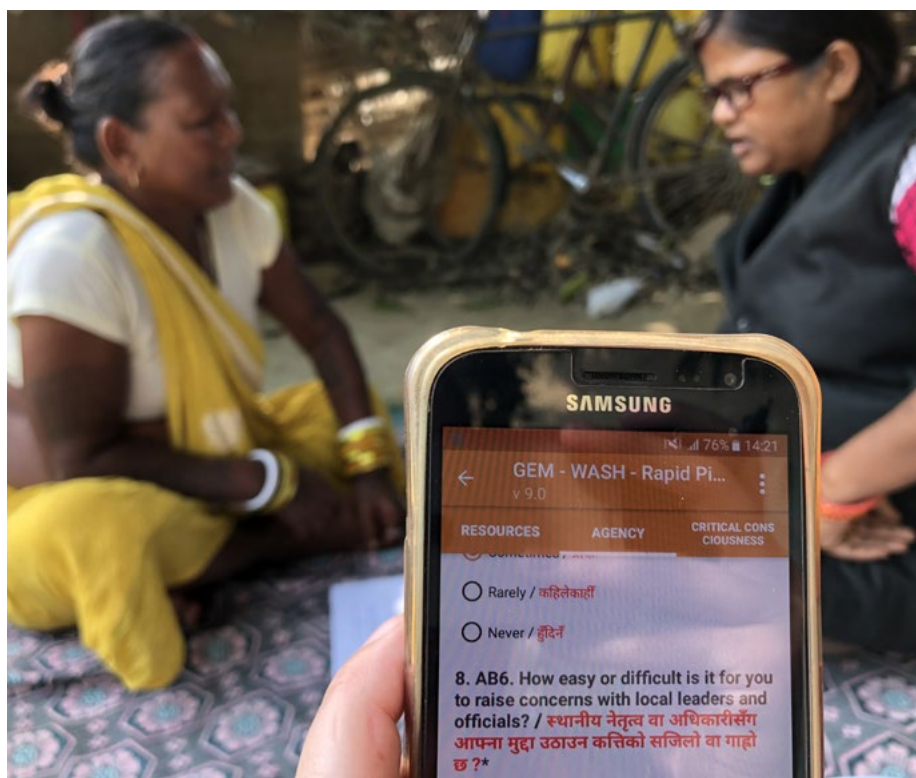
Implementing the WASH-GEM at a household in Sarlahi, Nepal
Credit: UTS-ISF / Jess MacArthur

What have we learnt?

WASH projects alone cannot change social norms, but they can influence and contribute towards that change. The previous section illustrates numerous promising practices involving social norms change within WASH projects. Through Water for Women, CSOs have sought to reach a range of people facing multiple and compounding sources of disadvantage, including individuals and groups who are marginalised, excluded or actively discriminated against, or are experiencing inequities, inequalities or stigma. The varied project examples illustrate social transformation to help secure improved WASH behaviours such as participation in WASH committees, handwashing with soap, ending open defecation, for people affected by harmful or exclusionary social norms, including people with disabilities and people in minority ethnicity, sexuality, and gender identity groups (including women, girls, non-binary and trans people). The CSOs involved have also built their professional and organisational capacity to support and work towards sustaining these changes. This section summarises the main lessons from Water for Women's WASH projects.

Social norms underpin practical WASH needs, behaviours, and strategic interests

Water for Women projects are designed to meet the practical needs and strategic interests of women, girls, people with disabilities, people from SGM communities, and other marginalised groups. Activities motivate communities to question harmful norms, countering stigma and invisibility, and build momentum for social change. In particular, multiple strategies have been used to influence harmful and exclusionary norms affecting the WASH practices and decision-making of women and girls and people with disabilities in private and public spheres. Positive social norms must be put at the centre of WASH programming to ensure those whose interests are systematically overlooked are not left behind.

Do No Harm is vital in norms change

Although Water for Women's CSO partners have seen positive changes in many communities, organisations and government departments, it is still the case that women (as well as some men and people from SGM communities) and people with disabilities who do not conform to gender and social roles are likely to experience backlash and resistance. More focus is needed on the potential for unintended harm when seeking to change social norms.

RHOs can lead social norms change

Water for Women's partners have made new connections, or continued their collaborations, with GEDSI actors. These interactions have helped shift individual attitudes and challenge personal biases. Traditional WASH actors also report that through regular engagement with RHOs, their own confidence to discuss and prioritise GEDSI has grown. For WASH CSOs, these outcomes highlight the importance of learning from local agencies with a long track record in tackling social norms, requiring that WASH actors cultivate an attitude of open-mindedness and a commitment to learning and progress. Forming truly equitable partnerships between WASH agencies and RHOs means a shift away from engagement on specific activities, which are often instrumentalist in nature, and siloed rather than systematic.

WASH actors can be more systematic on social norms

Although progress is being made, the evidence base on what works, where, for whom and in what circumstances to tackle social norms through WASH programs is at an early stage in scope and scale. Aside from UNICEF, few WASH programs have used social norms theory to guide program development and inform strategies for leaving no one behind. More systematic integration of social norm change requires the use of evidence and theory to inform initiatives that promote positive social norms that already exist (as a way to weaken the hold of exclusionary norms), work with reference groups such as friends, neighbours, community influencers, family decision-makers, to support change and amplify role models.

Staff must be resourced to implement social norm change activities

Ensuring that staff are resourced to work on social norms requires institutionalised support including funding for staff or programs, time for staff to reflect on and be sensitised to the impacts of social norms, and organisational or government approval for training or the program approaches to be implemented. An appropriate starting point is to affirm the strengths of current procedures to shift harmful norms; the WASH team will then be better resourced to tackle difficult issues.

Maintaining social norms requires scaling and monitoring

Once a new norm has been established, ongoing efforts are needed to reinforce and scale it for permanent behaviour change. Water for Women's projects have demonstrated several successful initiatives that scale deep, but to change social norms, values and practices, there is a continued need to scale out – to replicate approaches with other communities beyond the initial geographical scope – and scale up, to institutionalise social norms change in WASH systems so that they are sustained beyond the life of Water for Women. Measuring norms change should use both qualitative and quantitative tools, as well as principles relating to complexity-aware monitoring. Given that norms take a considerable time to change, little is known about whether the CSO WASH programs will bring about – or contribute to – sustained change in norms and behaviour over time. This highlights the need for realist evaluations to include a social norms dimension and to ask what works where, for whom, in what circumstances.

The guidance accompanying this review shows where readers can find tools to build their capacity and expertise around social norms programming - learn how to diagnose social norms, mainstream attention to social norms into WASH activities and participatory approaches, and take advantage of a menu of monitoring indicators to measure norms change. The resources can be adapted to track norms change resulting from the initiatives and strategies being applied in WASH programs.

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Annex 1. Key definitions

Term	Definitions
Agency	Capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power.
Attitudes	What an individual thinks and feels about a behaviour or practice, and whether they judge it favourably or unfavourably.
Allyship	An active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning, re-evaluating and practising, in which a person holding systemic power seeks to end oppressions in solidarity with a group of people who are systemically disempowered.
Autonomy	A person's ability to act on his or her own values and interests.
Backlash	A strong negative reaction, or a more extreme or aggressive form of resistance to gender-related social change (see Resistance).
Champions	A supporter or defender of the cause for gender transformative change. The contestability of using the term "champions" for men is recognised; i.e., there is a move towards using "partners for change" or "allies", to ensure greater equity. Women and LGBTQ+ advocates for equality are never referred to as champions.
Collective beliefs	Social norms are collective beliefs and expectations within a group about what is typical or normal behaviour for the group.
Descriptive norm – "what I think others do"	A rule of behaviour that people engage in because they think other people in their reference group do the same thing.
Do No Harm	A duty of care and responsibility to ensure no harm is caused to individuals, households, communities, and others because of engagement with these individuals and groups.
Early adopter	A person who embraces new norm or abandons a harmful norm before most other people do.
Formative research	Gathering existing information or collecting data before a program begins and using it to inform and tailor the program to the specific population of interest and program objectives.
Gender identity	Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experiences of gender, which may not correspond with their sex assigned at birth.
Gender equality, disability and social inclusion	Equality and inclusion in rights, access to livelihood assets, resources, and services for all, including people who experience marginalisation based on factors of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, caste, race, location, income, and other factors causing discrimination and exclusion.
Gender equity	Fairness for men, women and gender-diverse people. To ensure fairness, measures must be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages. Equity leads to equality.
Gender norms	Collective beliefs and expectations within a community or society, at any given point in time, about appropriate gendered behaviours based on a person's sex assigned at birth, and the relation and interactions between people depending on their gender. These gendered norms are usually internalised during childhood and adolescence and continue to shape gender stereotyping throughout the life course.
Gender role attitudes	The views held by individuals regarding the roles people should play in society (e.g., the distinction between paid and unpaid work) based on their sex characteristics, sex assigned at birth, gender identity and gender expression.
Gender roles	Expected roles, including behaviours, activities, and responsibilities, based on sex characteristics, sex assigned at birth, gender identity and gender expression.
Gender socialisation	A process that challenges and changes harmful norms to achieve gender-equitable outcomes.
Gender stereotypes	Generalisations about the characteristics of a group of people based on gender.
Gender-transformative WASH	WASH approaches that seek to transform gender roles and promote more gender-equitable and diverse relationships between people regardless of their gender identity. Water for Women uses a "towards transformation spectrum": harmful/unaware; aware; responsive/accommodating; transformative. Gender-transformative WASH requires changing power dynamics to bring about equality in decision-making and ensure no-one is left behind.
Injunctive norms – "what I think others approve of"	Injunctive norms influence behaviour when people engage in a practice because they believe that others in their group expect them to do so, will reward them if they do, and sanction them if they do not.

Intersectionality	The way race, class, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity come together to create unique and specific narratives that shape and inform power structures.
Legal norms	Formal rules that guide how we behave. They are usually written down in constitutions and laws and enforced by institutions – e.g., police and the justice system.
Masculinity	A gender expression that is socially defined across historical and cultural contexts. It is different to gender identity; for example a tom girl's sex characteristics might identify them as female, their gender identity as a girl, their gender expression as masculine. A butch lesbian may be masculine, as may a gay man. A trans woman can be masculine, and a gender non-binary person can be masculine at some times and feminine at others. Masculinity does not have to exert different power relations – that would be toxic masculinity.
Moral norms – "what I think is the right thing to do"	Norms based on a person's inner beliefs (or religious beliefs) about right and wrong. What other people think does not affect a person's moral beliefs – *they are personal rules that guide how we behave.*
Normative expectations – "what we believe that people in our reference group expect us to do"	Shared expectations about what we *think* other people in the group think is good or bad behaviour. These are expectations about *what other people think* about desirable and undesirable behaviours.
Outcome expectancies – "how I think people will respond to my behaviour"	Outcome expectancies are a person's beliefs or expectations about how others will respond if they engage (or do not engage) in a certain behaviour. Outcome expectancies can be positive (rewards) or negative (sanctions).
Pluralistic ignorance	Pluralistic ignorance describes a situation where most members of a group or community conform to a norm because they assume that the majority also conform or expect them to do so, while in reality, most people privately disapprove of the norm.
Reference groups – the people to whom the social norm applies"	Reference group members believe that the opinions and behaviours of other people in the group matter and determine whether they conform to a norm. Reference groups reward people for following a norm and punish them if they do not.
Resistance	An active pushing back against progressive programs, policies, and perspectives. There is a spectrum of resistance, which includes denial of the problem, refusal to implement a change initiative, reversing a change initiative, or an aggressive, attacking response.
Rights holder organisation	Rights holders are individuals or social groups that have particular entitlements in relation to specific duty-bearers. There are often specific social groups whose human rights are not fully realised, respected, or protected. RHOs protect and represent their interests.
Sexual and gender minorities	A group of people whose gender identity or expression can, but does not necessarily, fit into the binary "man or women", female or male" categories. Gender minorities include people with gender-diverse identities, including non-binary, trans identities and third gender identities. Sexual minorities are people whose sexual orientation does not align with the dominant heterosexual norm.
Social networks – "the people to whom I am connected"	A social network is the connections, interactions and relationships between individuals. Reference groups are part of the social networks with which individuals interact.
Social norms	Unwritten rules of beliefs, attitudes, and values that are considered acceptable in a particular social group or culture.
Social pressures	The exertion of influence on a person or group by another person or group (e.g., a reference group).
Socio-Ecological Model	A model of the interplay between individual, relationship, community and societal factors that influence individuals.
Target behaviour	A behaviour the program is tasked with changing.

Twin-track approach	Combined mainstreaming and targeted activities. Considered best practice for integrating gender equality and social inclusion into policy and programming.
Women and girls	A term that includes women and girls in all their diversities, e.g., women and girls with disabilities, women from differing economic and educational backgrounds, women of diverse sexualities and gender histories (including transgender women), and women from differing racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

Source: Adapted from UNICEF (2021)

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