



## SOCIAL NORMS DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

### Introduction

Social norms overlap with development outcomes throughout a woman's life-cycle: they will determine whether she has any opportunity to forge her own pathway to empowerment and to contribute to the empowerment of her community or not. Research on discriminatory social norms have shown the many ways in which discriminatory laws and practices may curtail her ability to break the cycle of poverty and access the resources she needs for her empowerment.

The social norms guidance document is a set of exercises that helps programme teams to identify and discuss the social norms, perceptions and expectations that shape, constrain or promote young women and women's economic empowerment in economic development initiatives within their context.

These exercises are complementary to our strategies and interventions on employment, food security, care work, enterprise and markets development.

## **Average time for using this tool?**

1-day workshop. See individual steps for time breakdowns

## **Who leads?**

Local partner with legitimacy in the local area when possible.

## **Who needs to be involved?**

Oxfam project staff and partners; Oxfam programme managers; community level facilitators; community members including young women and men; other organisations in order to gather additional information, as needed.

## **Important Related Items**

- Gender Based Violence Guidance
  - Women's Economic Leadership
  - Systems and Power Analysis
- 

## **Activity 1: Getting started**

Introduction to social norms and the changing social norms in a specific context

---

## **Activity 2: Gendered work roles**

Step 1 is required for all participants. For Step 2, facilitators split the group in two to identify social norms within care work or paid/productive work to challenge or promote.

---

## **Activity 3: Violence against Women and Girls/Early Marriage and Pregnancy**

Facilitators select either Step 1 or Step 2 to identify social norms relating to the either topic.

## Activity 1: Getting started

(2.45 hours)

### Step 1: Introduction

(30 minutes)

Talking about social norms can be uncomfortable for some participants. Your first job is to make them feel as comfortable as possible doing so. Ensure they know that there is no right or wrong answer to give during the workshop, and that all opinions and ideas are equally valid.

Explain and agree objectives of the session/day with participants.

Working together, also define the terms we will be using (norms, attitudes, perceptions), and ask for examples to check understanding. Write this up so it is visible throughout the workshop.

Present evidence relating to the social norms which will be discussed, that is relevant to the context. This is important for framing the discussions. For example, present numbers of women in different paid occupations in project area/agricultural markets; survey results on prevalence of gender-based violence; results on women's and men's time use from the Rapid Care-Analysis or Household Care Survey. You may also choose to present this evidence at the start of Step 4 instead.

### Step 2: Identifying social norms relating to gender

(45 minutes)

Objective:

- To identify current social norms relating to gender as understood by group members

Method:

1. Split the group into girls/women and boys/men (or to save time do together)
2. Give each group two flipchart papers to write and draw on – one with a woman drawn on it, and one with a man drawn on it.
3. Ask participants to think about a 'good' woman and a 'good' man. What are they like? What are their main responsibilities? How do they spend their day?
4. The men/boys should start by considering a good woman, while the women/girls start by considering a good man. Then swap so both groups consider both women and men. Build on this by asking what makes a good wife/husband, mother/father,

daughter/son, and tease out differences in social norms dependent on age.

5. Together as a group, list the tasks that 'good' women and men perform [this will be used in Activity 2 Step 2].
6. Discussion questions:
  - How should women and men behave? What tasks are acceptable for women/men to do? Why? What would your peers say?
  - How should young women and young men behave and what is considered acceptable for them to do? Why? In what way is this different to how older men and women should behave and what is considered acceptable for them to do? What would your peers say?
  - What tasks and responsibilities should women and men do? Why? What would your peers say?
  - How do you know that women and men should do these tasks? Who says so?
  - Why is it important to follow these divisions of tasks? What happens if they are not followed?
  - Ask participants to identify sayings about 'good' women/men, wives/husbands, mothers/fathers, daughters/sons, or about 'bad' women/men.

### Step 3: How have norms changed?

(45 minutes)

Objectives:

- To strengthen the understanding that norms have changed and will continue to change, and to what extent changing norms are significant.
- To help participants think more creatively about norms, with more nuance, and respect each other's opinions.

Method:

1. Building on the first exercise, choose a relevant time-period for change.
2. Select 2-4 of the most interesting 'norms' that have emerged from Step 2, depending on how many small groups can be formed. Select norms that represent different dimensions of life/behaviour.
3. Divide participants into small groups to work on one norm each.
4. For each norm, ask "what would have been the answer 5-10 years ago?" For each norm, ask "What would have been the answer 5-10 years ago? Has this changed for you compared to your father/mother, grandmother/grandfather?"
5. Encourage people to expand briefly if they give a short answer – was it different for different social classes, ethnicities, locations?

[But ask people to wait to discuss *how* change happened until Step 4].

6. Notice/comment when participants use sayings or expressions.
7. Notice/comment when participants mention what happens when people didn't adhere to norms – what were the consequences.

### Step 4: What influences social norms?

(45 minutes)

Objectives:

- To strengthen participants' understanding of the complexity of the process of changing social norms, perceptions, and expectations.
- To identify a range of sources and drivers of change

Method:

1. Keep participants in the same groups. Write or draw the 2-4 norms selected in Step 3 in the middle of a large piece of paper.
2. Ask participants to draw a 'rich picture' of people, institutions or drivers that influence, change, promote or reinforce or that norm. *E.g. peers, parents, teachers, religious/cultural/political leaders, celebrities; specific laws and policies; media or images; evidence or information; migration or new populations; schools/training; new technology, employment etc.*
3. Next, ask them to discuss and note by the picture whether this source /driver changed or reinforced the existing norm, and how influential it was.
4. Then ask participants what the family/community responses were to this change in norms – has there been praise and approval of those exhibiting the new norm? ignoring the change? criticism? backlash or violence? acceptance and flexibility? What is the perception of the benefits or problems associated with the new norms?

### Activity 2: Unpaid care and paid/productive work

(3 hours)

#### Step 1: Perceptions about the skills and value of work

(1.5 hours)

Objectives:

- To focus the group on perceptions about types of work, using their (new) understanding about norms to enhance 'critical thinking' about these perceptions.
- To describe the current, local perceptions/norms about gender roles and work.
- To introduce the idea that household/care tasks are also 'work'.

Method:

1. Write up/display a list of types of work, modified for the context.
2. The list should consist of occupations that many households would have at least one family member performing, so that people are comparing skills/value of the work they are familiar with. The list should also include 6-8 'care work' tasks/occupations, mixed in with productive tasks, but written in a way that doesn't identify it as paid or unpaid. (see below for an example list)
3. Ask participants to take 5 minutes to individually rank how s/he perceives these 'economic activities/work', from most skilled/valued to least skilled/valued – make a clear list from 1-15. Be clear with participants that there is no right answer.
4. Then ask participants to write each rank number next to the occupation-name on the list on display. Quickly calculate averages, display the range of ranks.
5. Ask participants to select (individually) five occupations that they think 'contribute most to family welfare'. Each participant then puts five stars on chart, one next to their selected five.
6. Ask participants to note on their own paper (individually) "10 years ago which occupations were usually men's and which usually women's" with 'M' and 'W'.
7. Then ask participants to note "which activities are now mostly men's and which are mostly women's" with an additional M and W on their own paper, or B for both. Each participant writes an arrow and letter on the chart for those occupations that s/he perceives are changing gender roles (e.g. =>W; =>B; =>M) and nothing written for those not changing.

Facilitate a discussion, using the following as a guide:

- a) Why do they think these are the **average ranks**? How do you think other women in the community would rank these occupations (differences between this group and 'other women')? How do you think other men in the community would rank these occupations (differences between this group and 'other men')? What are the implicit criteria for skills/value?

- b) How does **average rank compare with the stars** for that task? With the **gender roles**? Are there any patterns about changes in gendered roles? Why is this? Does the gender role change depending on whether the task is paid or unpaid?
- c) What would you want to change in public perceptions of these skills, particularly the lower-ranked ones? Why? What would be the **(dis)advantages of reconsidering the skills/value** of these activities?
- d) What do you perceive as helpful or difficult about the changes noted in gender roles? **(Dis)advantages of changing gendered occupational roles** – for the community or the local economy? What might be the response (or backlash)?

**Example list:**

- Planting/harvesting crop
- Drying, processing an agricultural product
- Carpentry/making furniture
- Child care (bathing, looking after)
- Laundering clothes
- Bicycle repair
- Caring for ill people/nursing
- Preparing meals/cooking
- Trading/retail shop
- Driving a vehicle/transport
- Feeding/breastfeeding children
- Repairing a house/roof
- Cleaning house/sweeping/beds
- Collecting fuel or water
- Taking care of farm animals
- Teaching/tutoring/training

**Step 2: Changing gendered norms about care work and paid/productive work**

(1.5 hours)

**Objectives:**

- To identify specific changes in social norms about gendered roles in care work segregation that are most relevant, and would be most beneficial to (young) women’s economic empowerment in this programme, prioritised by the feasibility of change.
- Using the results of Activity 1, to brainstorm potential interventions, using a combination of drivers/sources of change, to promote positive change in these norms.

**Method:**

1. Reintroduce the list developed in Activity 1 Step 2 on tasks which a 'good woman/man' do. Give participants an additional 10/15 minutes to add new tasks if needed.
2. Ask participants to identify unpaid care work and paid/productive work from the list. For the list of paid/productive work, ask them to further divide into work usually done by women and that usually done by men (participants can add tasks to the list if necessary).
3. Divide participants into two mixed groups: Group A will focus on unpaid care work, Group B on paid/productive work.
4. Ask the following questions:
  - Group A:
    - Why do you think that men/boys do not do "care tasks" or "women's tasks" normally?
  - Group B:
    - *Why do you think that women/girls do not do "men's farm/productive tasks" or "men's paid work" normally?*
    - *Why do men/boys not do "women's farm/productive tasks" or "women's paid work" normally?*

Encourage people to think about paid employment practices, institutions, education, policies and laws, as well as social norms.
5. Choose 2 tasks that the group identified (in Activity 1 Step 3) as '*not changing*'. Ask participants to draw these on a piece of paper and ask them:
  - Group A:
    - What is stopping men/boys from doing this work?
    - "What is stopping women/girls from requesting/giving more unpaid care tasks to men/boys?"
  - Group B:
    - *What is stopping women/girls from doing paid/productive work?*
    - *What is stopping women from doing what are seen as "men's jobs"?*
    - *What is stopping men from requesting/giving more of their productive tasks to women/girls?*
    - *What is stopping men from doing what are seen as "women's jobs"?*

Also identify norms and sayings expressed this point.
6. Group A: Ask participants to put a star by those (*women's*) care work tasks that are *more* feasible to ask men/boys to do. How might this change happen in your context? Would it happen? What would be the benefits or drawbacks of changing this norm about gender roles?
  - Group B: Ask participants to put a star by those (*men's*) paid/productive work tasks that are *more* feasible for women/girls to do. How might this change happen in your context? Would it

happen? What would be the benefits or drawbacks of changing this norm about gender roles?

7. Ask how they would promote change in these norms. Looking back at Activity 1 Step 4 on influences of change, what would be effective sources/drivers of change? Ask participants to brainstorm strategies for change.

### **Activity 3: Violence against women and girls and early marriage and pregnancy**

#### **Step 1: Violence against women and girls**

(1 hour)

Objectives:

- To identify social norms relating to violence against women and girls.
- Building on Activities 1 and 2, explore how these relate to economic empowerment. .

Method

1. Ask participants to think about the topic from Activity 1 Step 2 on the good woman/man.
2. Ask them to reflect on what happens when a wife cannot be a good wife or a husband cannot be a good husband. Discuss a recent domestic violence case in the news, or mention a local saying, e.g. 'if he doesn't beat you, he doesn't love you', and ask why people say that. Be aware of sensitivities around this topic.
3. Give each person a piece of paper, and ask them to rate the following question in private by writing a number from 1-10 showing them the table below: "Taking into account the experiences of this community, to what extent have local women been hit or beaten in their households over the past year?" Tell them that their answers will be anonymous.
4. Ask the group not to share their responses with others, then collect and display the range of ranks.
5. Discussion questions:
  - Why does hitting or beating happen in this community?
  - Does it relate to when women/girls are not acting as a 'good' woman/wife/mother/daughter?
  - Does it relate to the issues discussed in Activity 2 about the types of work that women and men are expected to do?
  - Explore different scenarios:
    - When women do not do care responsibilities to a 'good enough' standard
    - When women do paid/productive work which is considered 'men's' work or a 'man's' job

- When women have to leave the house or travel long distances to do paid/productive work.
  - What does the community say about women who do these things?
  - Does (fear of) harassment of women or violence against women prevent women from engaging in productive/paid work or in types of paid/productive work (e.g. work outside the household/far from home)? Explore different scenarios:
    - When women are in the workplace (behaviour of male bosses/colleagues)
  - When women are on their way to work (on the street/ public transport). Do harassment/violence have any consequences for individuals or the community relating to the type of tasks and activities that they can do? If so, what kinds? Explore examples:
    - Women/girls not able to engage in care work (e.g. because of physical/mental health/confidence issues resulting from violence)
    - Women/girls not able to engage in paid/productive work (e.g. because of physical/mental health/confidence issues resulting from violence, because of what the community might say about them)
    - Women/girls not able to pass on their care responsibilities to others (e.g. because of (fear of) violence, because of what the community might say about them)
    - Women/girls not able to do work which requires leaving the house/travel (e.g. because of (fear of) violence, because of what the community might say about them)
6. Add a second column to the table and repeat the exercise, asking them to rate the following question: "Taking into account the experiences of this community, to what extent have local women been hit or beaten in their households 3-5 years ago?"
7. Note the trend (*upward, flat, or downward*) and discuss the reasons for this.

	Over the past year	5/10 years ago
<b>1. Almost never happens here</b> (0 women in 10) <b>2. Occasionally happens here</b> (1 to 2 women in 10) <b>3. Regularly happens here</b> (3 women in 10) <b>4. Frequently happens here</b> (4 or more women in 10)		

8. Ask participants how they would promote change in norms relating to violence against women and girls, particularly relating to the issues discussed above. Looking back at Activity 1 Step 4 on

influences of change, what would be effective sources/drivers of change? Ask participants to brainstorm strategies for change.

## Step 2: Early marriage and pregnancy

(1 hour)

Objectives:

- To identify social norms relating to early marriage and pregnancy). Building on Activities 1 and 2, explore how these relate to economic empowerment.

Method

1. Give each person a piece of paper, and ask them to rate the following question in private by writing a number from 1-10 showing them the table below: "Taking into account the experiences of this community, to what extent have girls married at the age of 17 or earlier?" Tell them that their answers will be anonymous.
2. Ask the group not to share their responses with others, then collect the range of ranks.
3. On another piece of paper, ask them to write their ranking of the statement: "Taking into account the experiences of this community, to what extent have girls had children at the age of 17 or earlier?"
4. Ask the group not to share their responses with others, then collect and display the range of ranks for both questions.
5. Discussion questions:
  - What factors are important when considering at what age to marry or have children? Why do women and men marry or have children before the age of 17?
  - Are any of these factors related to how women/girls are perceived as being a 'good' woman/wife/mother/daughter?
  - Are any of these factors related to issues discussed in Activity 2 about the types of work that women and men are expected to do?
  - Explore different factors:
    - What the community will say about girls/women who do paid/productive work before getting married or get married at a later age.
    - The economic opportunities open to girls/women (both those who marry earlier/later).
  - Does getting married or having children at the age of 17 or earlier have negative consequences for individuals and the community relating to the type of tasks and activities that they can do? If so, what kinds? Explore examples:

- Women/girls not able to engage in care work effectively (e.g. because of increased care responsibility at a young age from marrying/having children early)
  - Women/girls not able to engage in paid/productive work (e.g. because of increased care responsibility at a young age from marrying/having children early, because of expectations about how a 'good wife' or 'good mother' should behave)
  - Women/girls not able to pass on their care responsibilities to others (e.g. because of expectations about how a 'good wife' or 'good mother' should behave)
- What are the advantages of women marrying or having children at the age of 17 or earlier relating to the type of tasks and activities that they can do? What are the risks if they wait longer? What are the potential advantages if they wait longer? Explore examples:
- What will the community say about women who engage in paid/productive work before getting married?
  - What benefits will there be for women who engage in paid/productive work before getting married?
6. Repeat the exercise, asking at what age women/men tended to marry and have children 3-5 years ago.
  7. Note the trend (*upward, flat, or downward*) and discuss the reasons for this.
  8. Ask participants how they would promote change in norms relating to early marriage and pregnancy, particularly relating to the issues discussed above. Looking back at Activity 1 Step 4 on influences of change, what would be effective sources/drivers of change? Ask participants to brainstorm strategies for change.