Shifting Social Norms with Trusted Leaders

Power, Emerging Insights, and the Evidence We're Still Missing

October 29th, 2025

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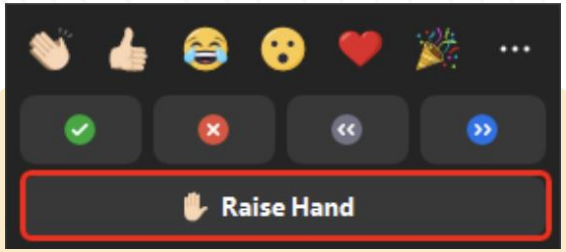
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Webinar Logistics

Use the **Chat Box** to join the dialogue.

Introduce yourself, and where you're joining from

For your questions, please click the **Q&A** icon and type in your questions there.



Use the reactions icon at the bottom of your screen to raise your hand if you would like to speak during the **general Q&A** session.

Tell Us About Yourself…

Say hello!

Share your name, location, and any work you do with trusted leaders in the chat.



What We'll Talk About

1. The Evidence Review
2. Creating Enabling Environments
3. Implementation
4. Monitoring and Measurement
5. Closing Reflections

Who do we mean when we're talking about trusted leaders: faith, culture and beyond.



Trusted individuals whose moral authority and local presence makes them the first stop for guidance and information.

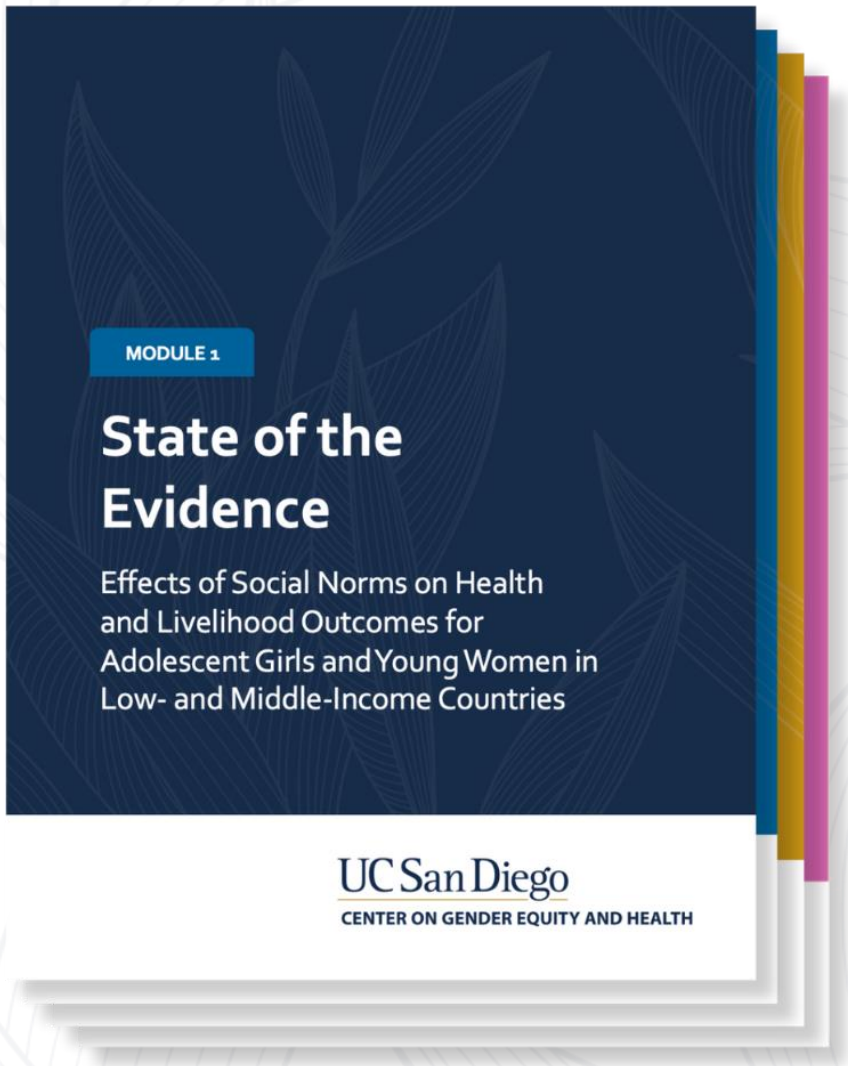


Faith actors might be **leaders or lay people** within faith networks, or groups within faith contexts



Cultural actors may be **leaders, traditional healers, family or community/family elders**, or other individuals who have cultural significance

What was the Evidence Review? Methods and State of the Evidence



Evidence Review Objectives

- **Reviewed and synthesized social norms evidence** related to health and livelihood outcomes (WEE, SRH – FP and HIV, GBV, CEFM) of adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

- **Explored**:
  - The relationship between **social norms and key behaviors**
  - Effective program approaches, mechanisms of change, cost efficiency and the potential for scale, specifically for interventions using entertainment media and engaging **"faith and cultural champions".**

Snapshot of Global Review Approach



Decided on research methods and reviewed methodology with multidisciplinary Advisory Board

Conducted search through scientific databases and rigorous search of grey literature and recommended materials

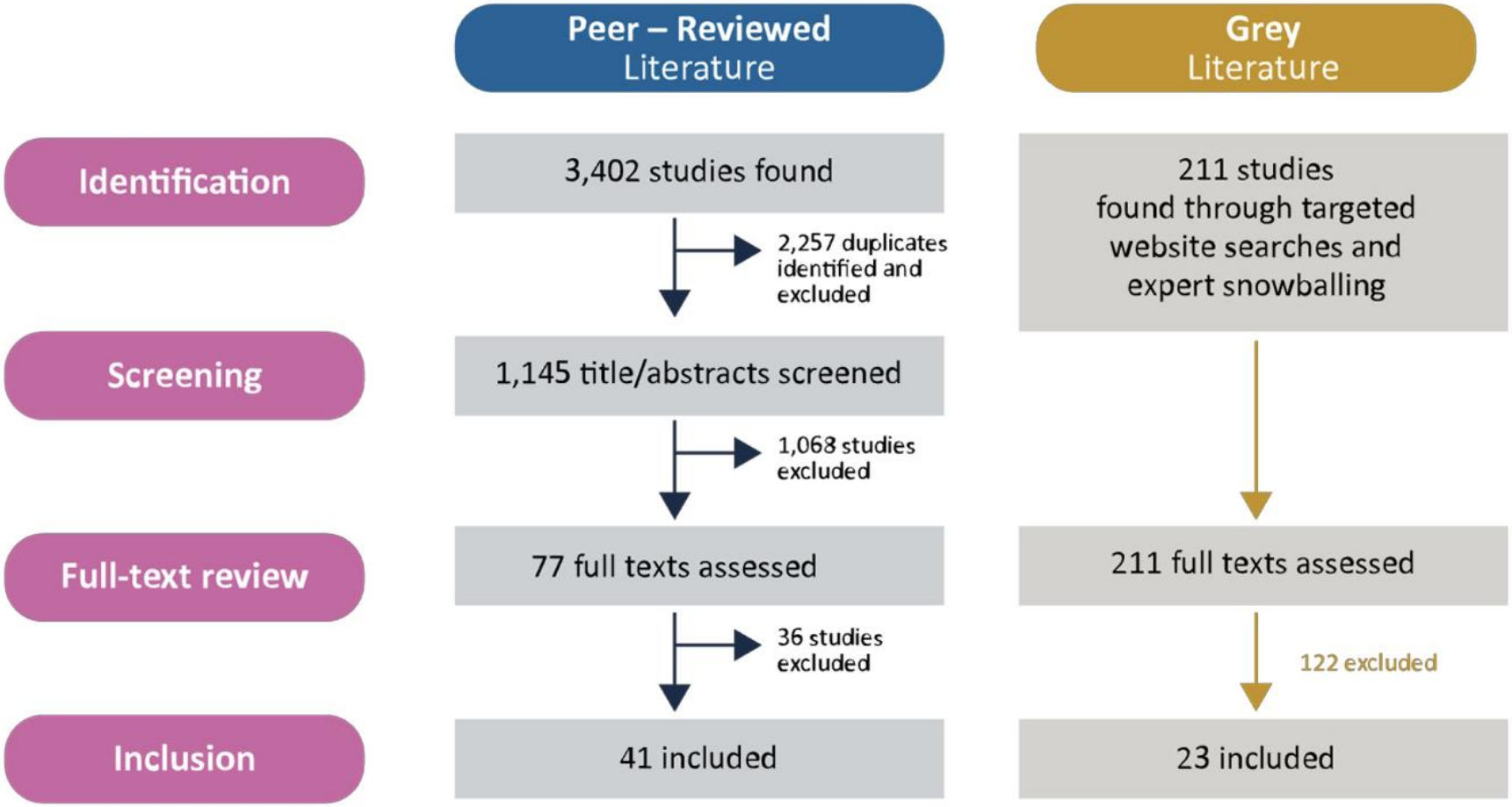
Reviewed title abstract and full text on Covidence; conducted double reviewer consensus process

Extracted data from included literature; ran descriptive analyses; conducted thematic analyses

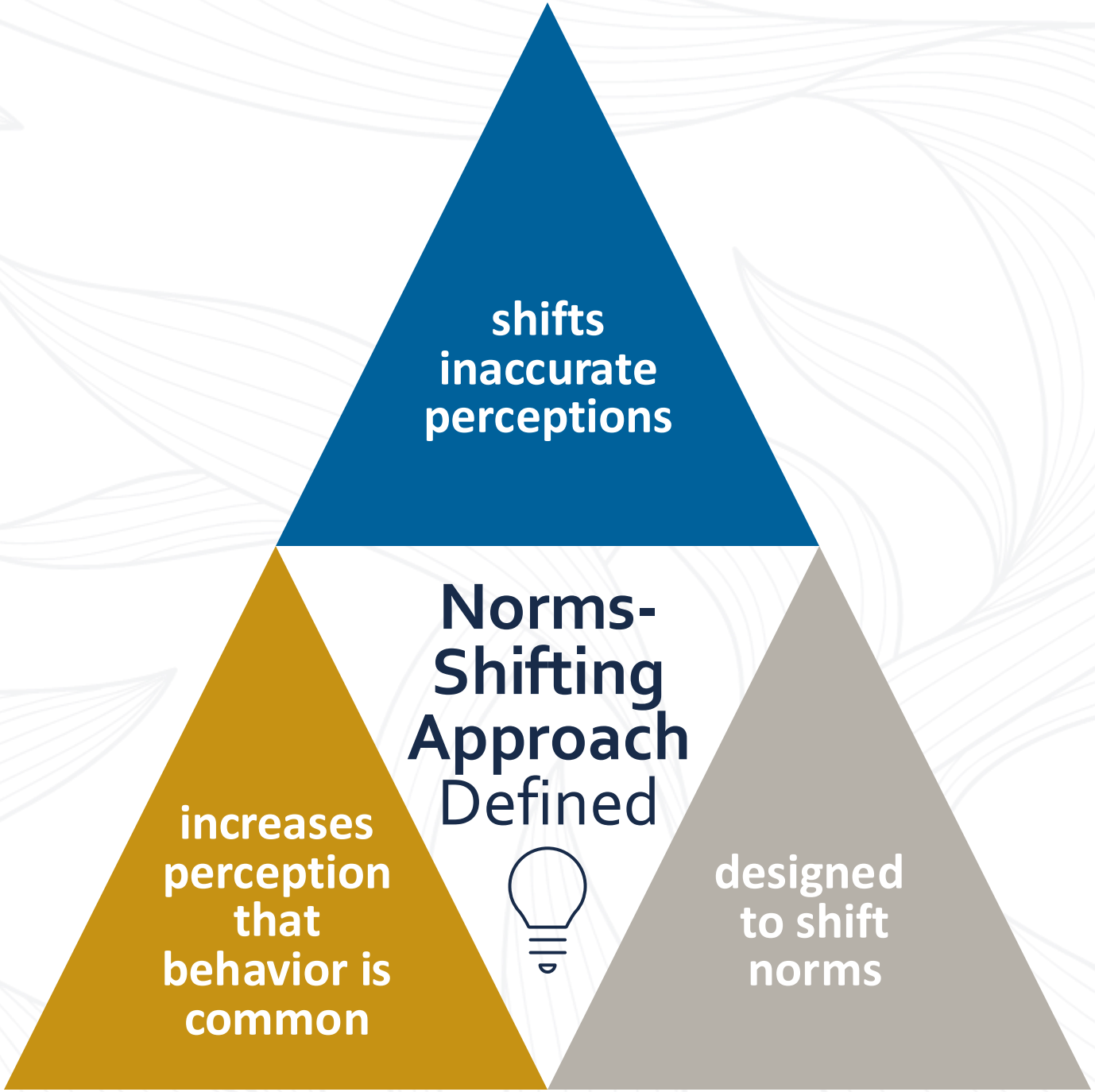
Held concurrent sensemaking workshops in region to vet early insights and identify gaps

Today, we share from the global review, and bring insights from country deep dives, where possible.

Flow Chart of Included Literature



41 interventions identified


shifts inaccurate perceptions
Norms-Shifting Approach Defined
increases perception that behavior is common
designed to shift norms

POSITIVE EVIDENCE

Strong evidence that social norms, behaviors and/or attitudes have **shifted in a positive direction.**

NEUTRAL EVIDENCE

Some evidence that social norms, behaviors and/or attitudes have shifted**, but not clearly positive.**

NEGATIVE EVIDENCE

Social norms, behaviors and/or attitudes have shifted **in the negative direction.**

UNCLEAR EVIDENCE

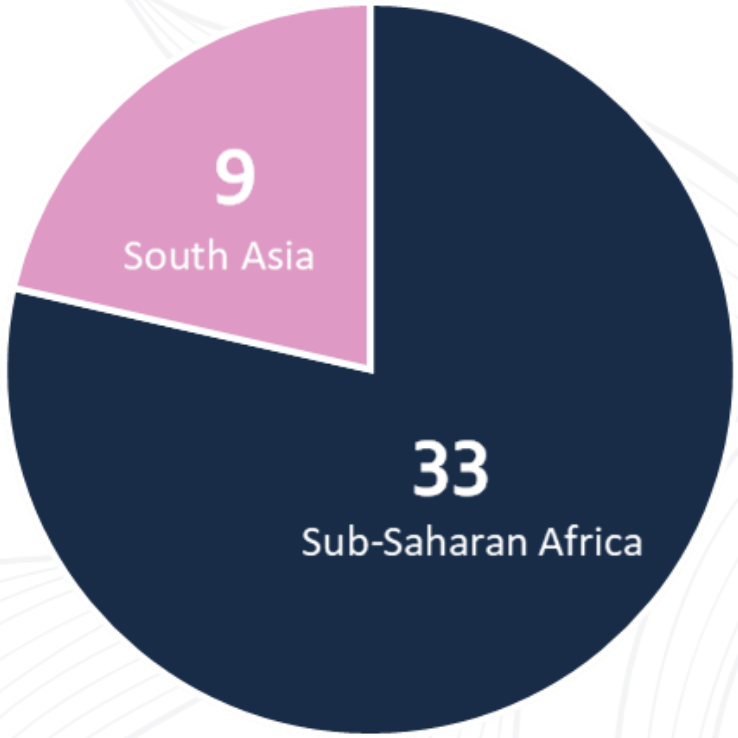
Unclear shifts in social norms, behaviors and/or attitudes or **documentation was not sufficient to be classified elsewhere.**

Visualizing evidence to identify trends and gaps



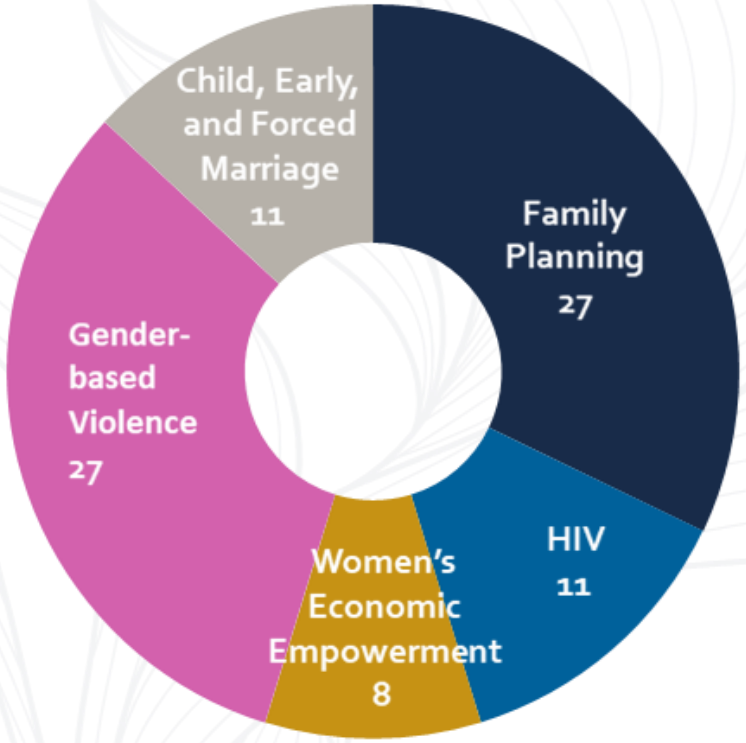
What was the state of evidence on trusted leaders?

Most interventions took place in sub-Saharan Africa, with gender-based violence and family planning the most addressed outcomes.



Geographical Distribution of Interventions

***Note**: One intervention was implemented in both regions*



Outcomes of Interventions

(Categories not mutually exclusive)

Interventions took a broad approach, addressing multiple overlapping norms.

Table 1. *Distribution of Faith and Cultural Champion Interventions (N=41) Across Norm Categories*

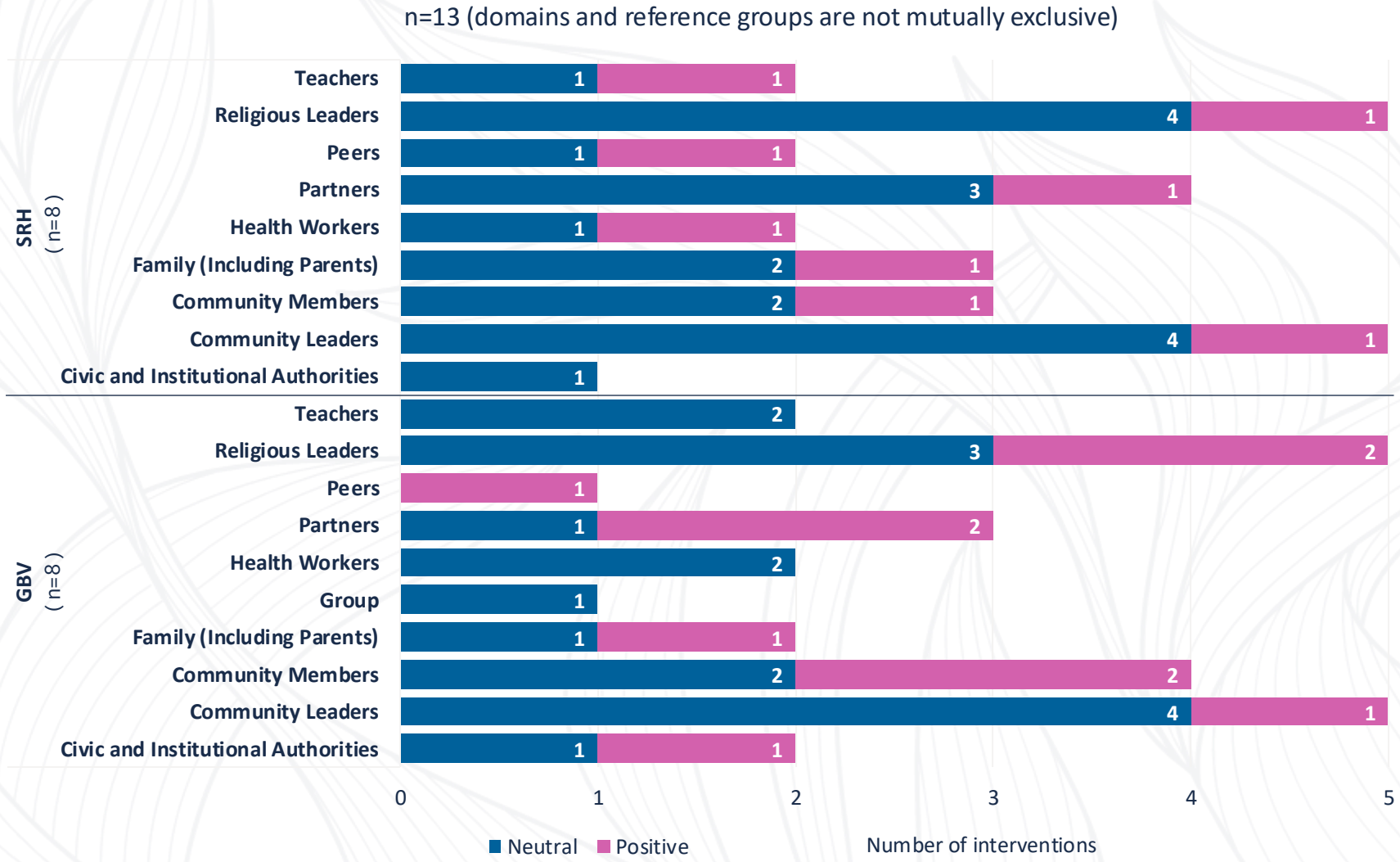
Gender-based Violence Under what circumstances is violence acceptable	29
Fertility Family size, timing and spacing of pregnancy	28
Gender Roles Men and women's roles and responsibilities	19
Social Systems Engagement with social systems and institutions *(health, religion, education)*	16
Decision-making, Communication and Agency Negotiating choices and power in day-to-day life	13
Marriage Decisions related to timing of marriage and choice of partners	12
HIV HIV prevention behaviors *(condom use, immunization, testing)*	12
Economic Opportunities Income generation and control over assets	12
Education Who should receive education and for how long	10
Sex and Sexuality Timing and conditions of sex *(pre-marital, extramarital, transactional)*	7
Body Body appearance and function *(menstruation, breastfeeding, puberty changes)*	7

Note*: Categories are not mutually exclusive.*

Only four focused solely on gender-based violence norms, while the remaining 37 covered multiple categories.

Trusted Leaders and Enabling Environments

Despite wide engagement, there were no clear trends in which reference groups drove positive shifts in social norms



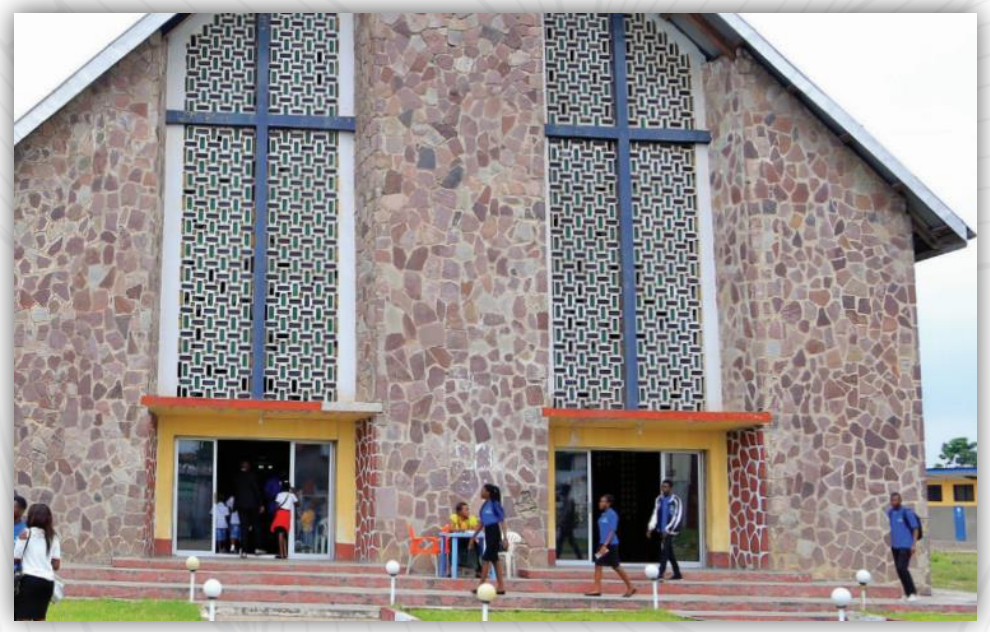
Sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence-related interventions engaged community leaders, members, and partners more than other outcomes.

Leaders were most engaged when supported to activate their social networks, equipping them with messages and opportunities to diffuse new norms

- Social mobilization
- Radio, television, or other mass media
- Drama
- Community events/celebrations
- Townhalls/meetings
- Public pledges and testimonies
- Faith-based group discussions
- Sermons by faith leaders (e.g., pastors, imams)

DEEP DIVE INSIGHT FROM KENYA

By linking legal principles, such as bans on early marriage or dowry reform, with moral teachings, faith leaders translated policy into practice.



Congregations in Kinshasa, DRC engaged in Masculinité, Famille et Foi. (Photo Credit: Institute for Reproductive Health 2019)

Interventions rarely involved stakeholders—especially adolescents—in intervention design or monitoring.

- Interventions engaged leaders, community members, health workers, and parents in design, but rarely adolescents.
- "Nothing for us without us" is central to adolescent and youth programming but was not widely reflected in the design of interventions.



Members of the Growing up GREAT! Youth Advisory Council in Kinshasa, DRC. (Photo Credit: Save the Children 2022)

Panel Discussion

Our Moderators and Speakers



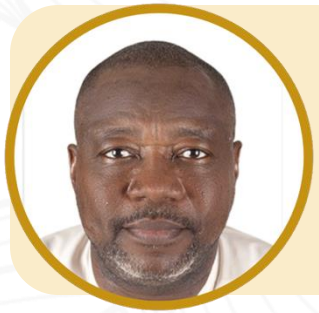
Andrew Jones, *Moderator*

Co-Director and Impact Partner, Imago Dei Fund



Jean de Dieu Munguyiko

Programs Manager, Association Mwana Ukundwa



Sufiyan M. Babale

FCC Project Director, Centre for Communication and Social Impact, Nigeria

Panel Discussion



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Sufiyan M. Babale

FCC Project Director, Centre for Communication and Social Impact, Nigeria

How do trusted actors in faith and cultural contexts foster enabling environments for social and gender norms change?

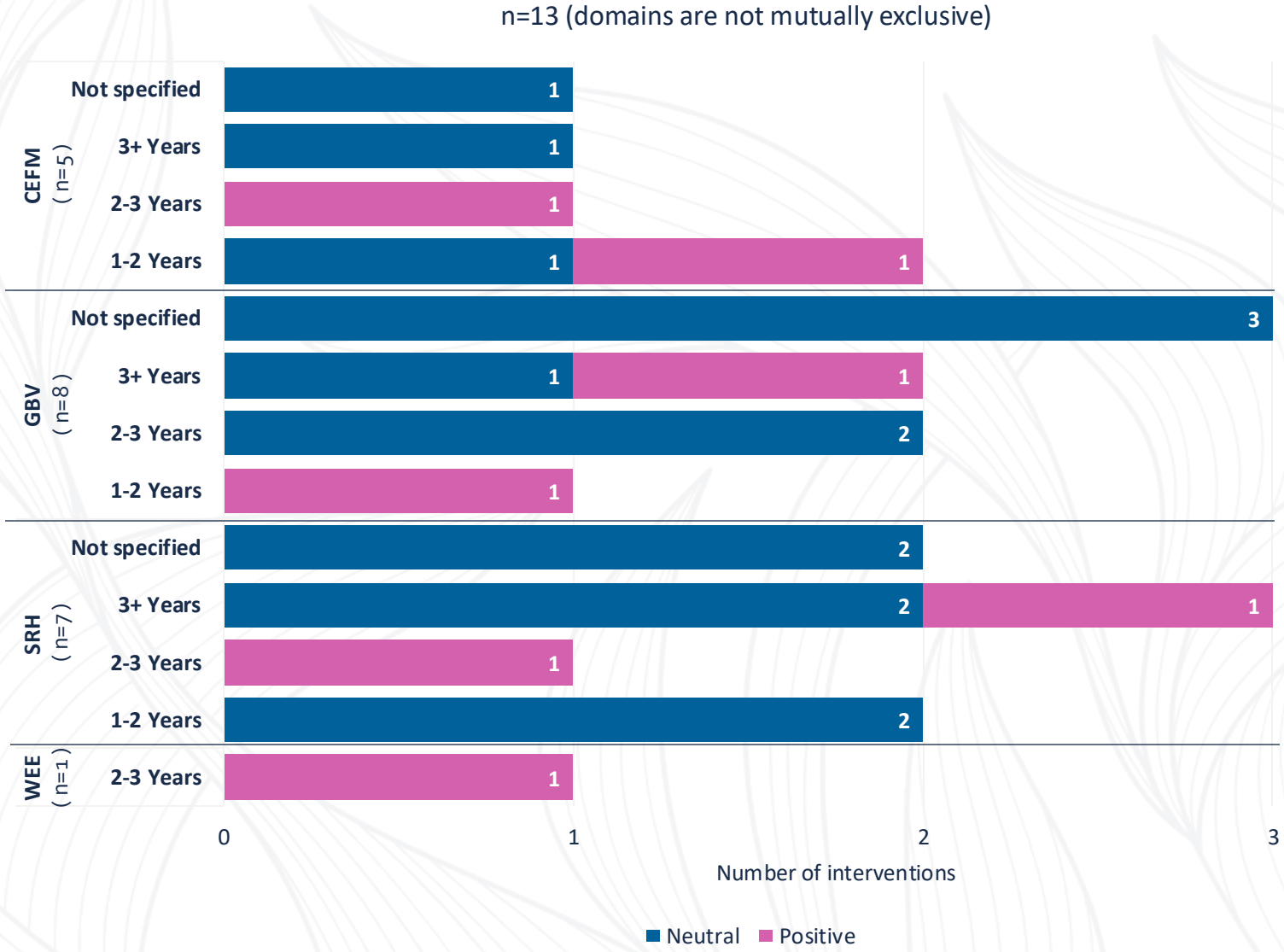
In what ways do they **influence peers, families, and community members** whose opinions shape behavior?

How does their **authority, spiritual leadership, and community embeddedness** enable (or constrain) norm shifts?

In your experience, what do you think is the **most important factor** in moving faith and cultural leaders **to enable** - and not constrain - **norms change?**

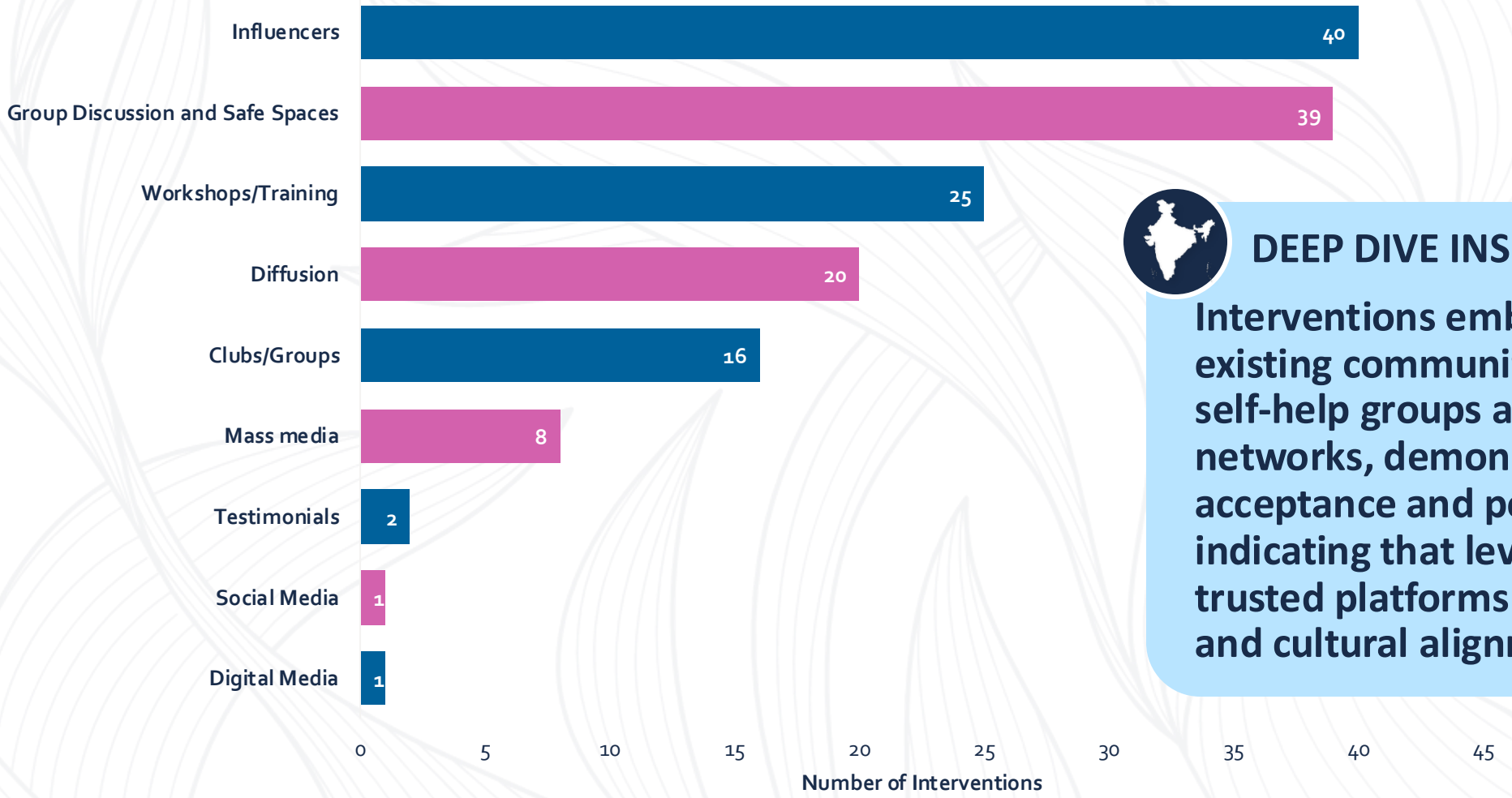
Implementation of Interventions Working with Trusted Leaders

Intervention duration and effectiveness of outcomes varied



Across domains, there was no clear trend in interventions' ability to shift social norms given any specific duration, suggesting that length alone does not determine effectiveness.

Across interventions and domains, there was no specific combination of approaches that proved more successful.



DEEP DIVE INSIGHT FROM INDIA

Interventions embedded within existing community structures, like self-help groups and religious networks, demonstrated higher acceptance and potential for scale, indicating that leveraging familiar, trusted platforms enhances credibility and cultural alignment.

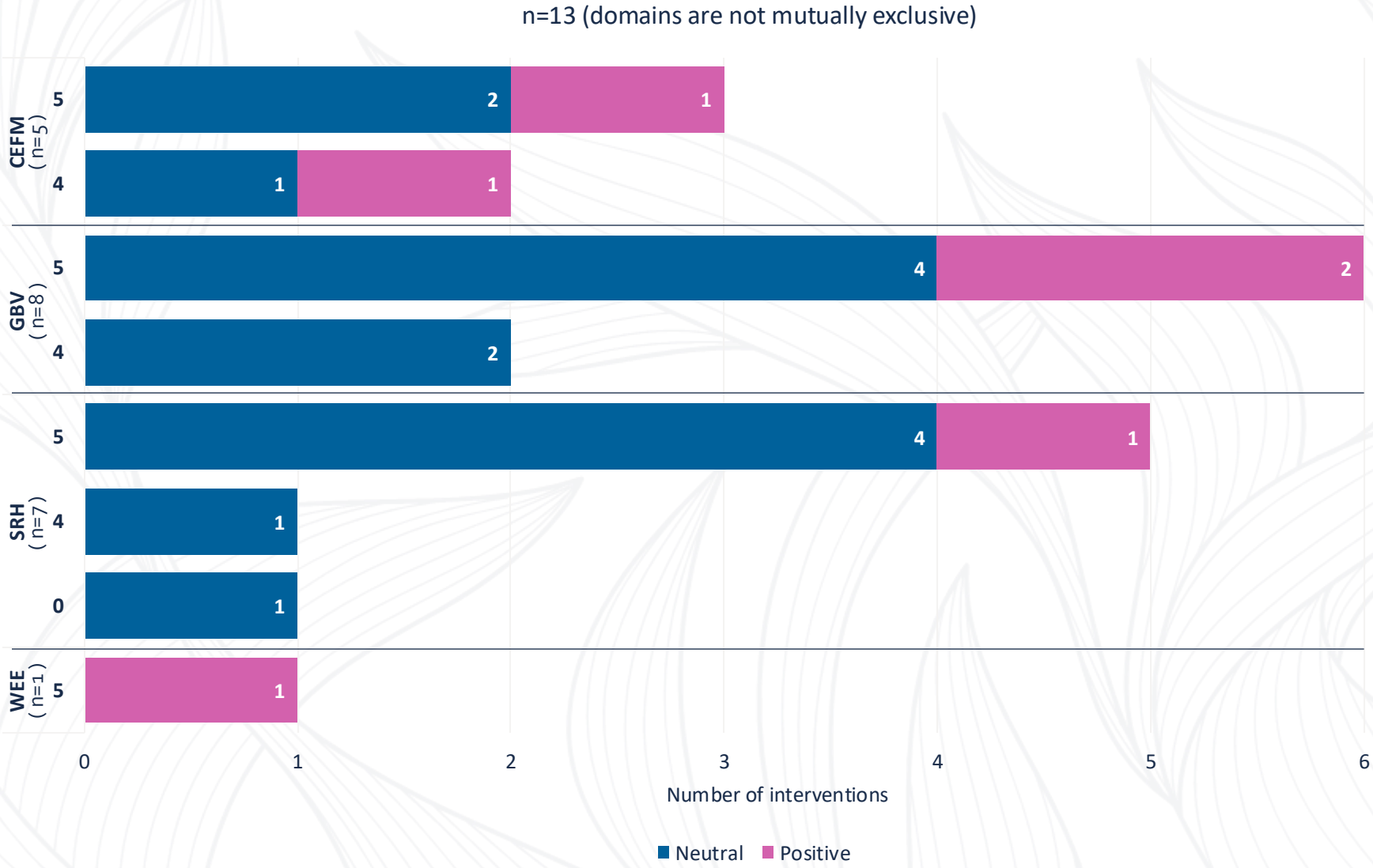
Interventions that used multiple change mechanisms achieved better outcomes than those relying on a single approach

Norms Shifting Mechanisms of Change

1. Engage communities or individuals in planning and implementing norm-shifting strategies
2. Seek community rather than individual level change
3. Make norms visible and catalyze reflection
4. Diffuse new ideas
5. Support the change process

Over 50% of interventions employed all five mechanisms.

Interventions varied by number of mechanisms implemented, with those using more mechanisms showing greater positive shifts



Those which employed all five mechanisms of change were more likely to positively shift norms than those relying on fewer approaches, but this did not guarantee of success.

There is a need for systematic attention to the positive and negative effects of interventions.

- Interventions may reinforce harmful norms
- Community resistance toward cultural champions
- Faith communities may oppose new ideas
- Interventions may expand champion reach and foster sense of community

Unintended consequences were rarely explored in depth – only 17 of 41 mentioned them.



DEEP DIVE INSIGHT FROM NIGERIA

Programs co-created messages with local leaders, using context-appropriate language, and framing content around shared values like protecting girls rather than rights-based rhetoric—or for example, using "child spacing" instead of "family planning."

Panel Discussion

Our Moderators and Speakers



Prabu Deepan, *Moderator*

Regional Director for Asia & Global GBV Lead, Tearfund UK



Rev. Domnic Misolo

Founder & Executive Director, Institute for Faith and Gender Empowerment



Sheenah Mbau

Program Manager Social Norms and Behaviour Change, Faith to Action Network



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Sheenah Mbau

Program Manager Social Norms and Behaviour Change, Faith to Action Network

Panel Discussion

Given your current role, can you tell us **how you became involved as a change agent**?

Which strategies work well to facilitate the **full engagement of trusted leaders** in programming for norms change?

What kinds of support do leaders themselves need to navigate social, personal, or others risks?

Monitoring and Measurement of Trusted Leader Programs

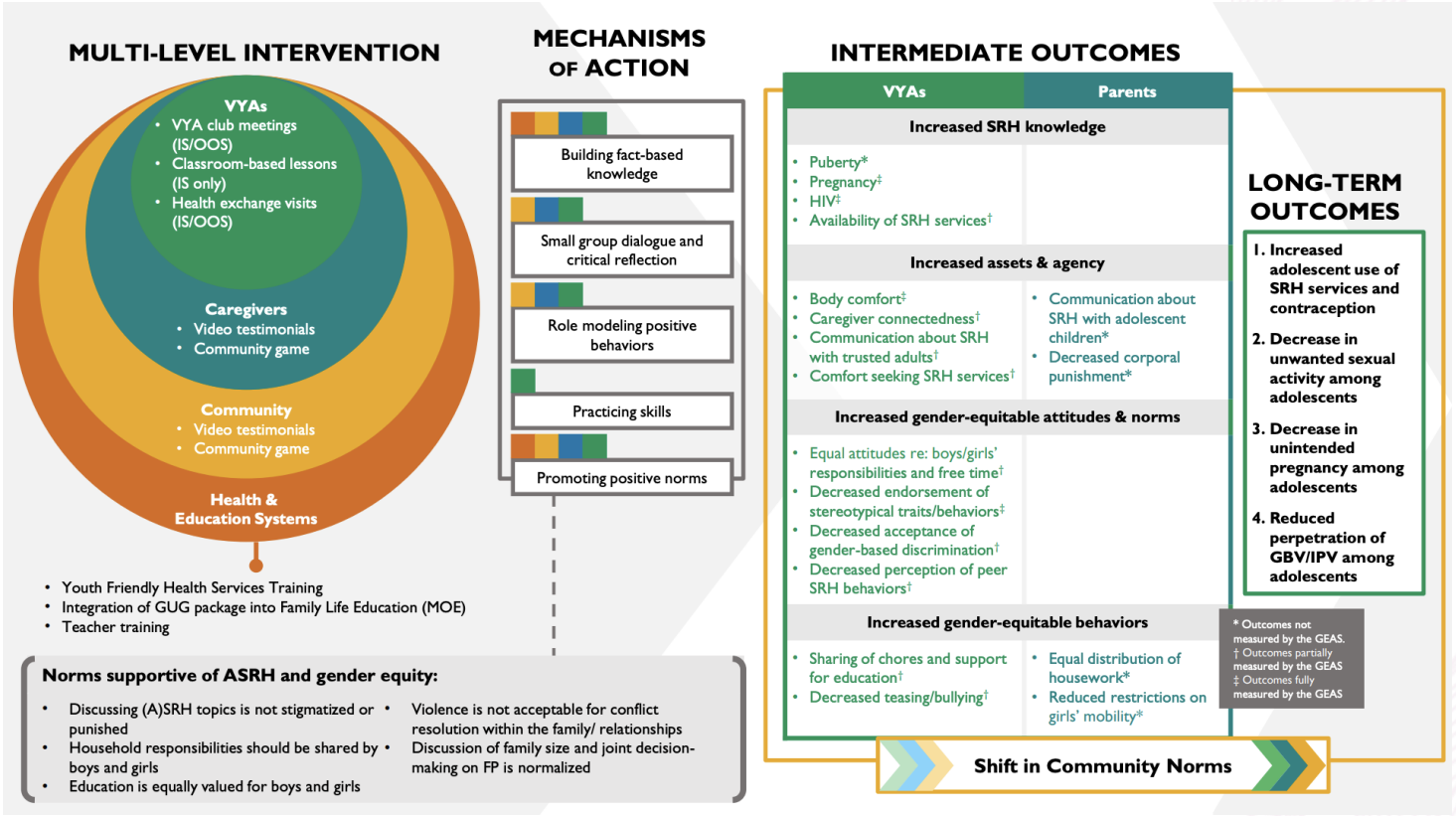
Though evidence on norms identification during intervention design is increasing, its application remains limited.

Approaches for identifying norms included:

1. Social Norms Exploration Tool
2. Social Norms Analysis Plot
3. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions, community conversations or stakeholder consultations
4. Human-centered design approaches
5. Social analysis, network, and action approaches
6. Community-based participatory research or formative assessments

More than 50% of the interventions reviewed did not specify how they identified the norms they sought to address; for those that did, it was often unclear how the findings informed design.

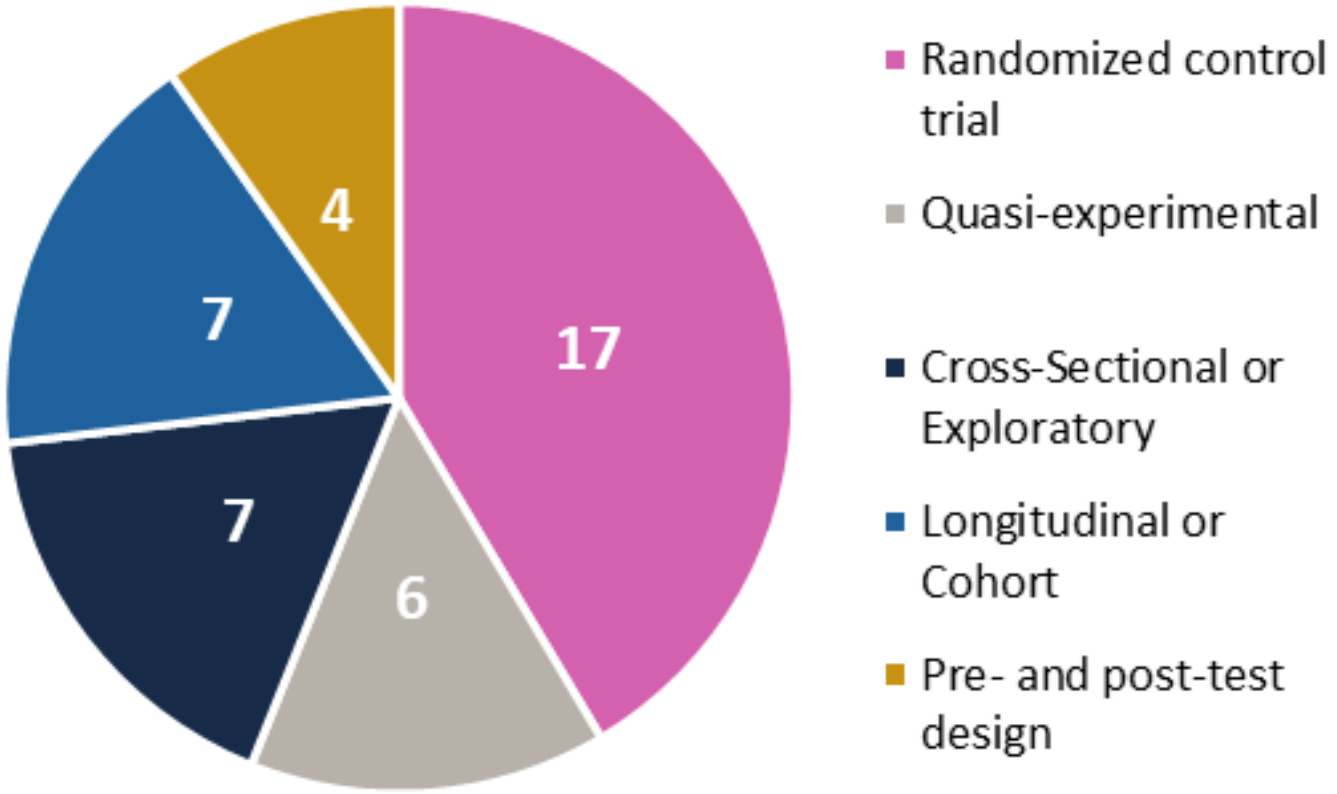
Half of the interventions used theory to inform design, fewer used it to guide evaluation.



A WELL-ARTICULATED PROGRAM THEORY OF CHANGE:

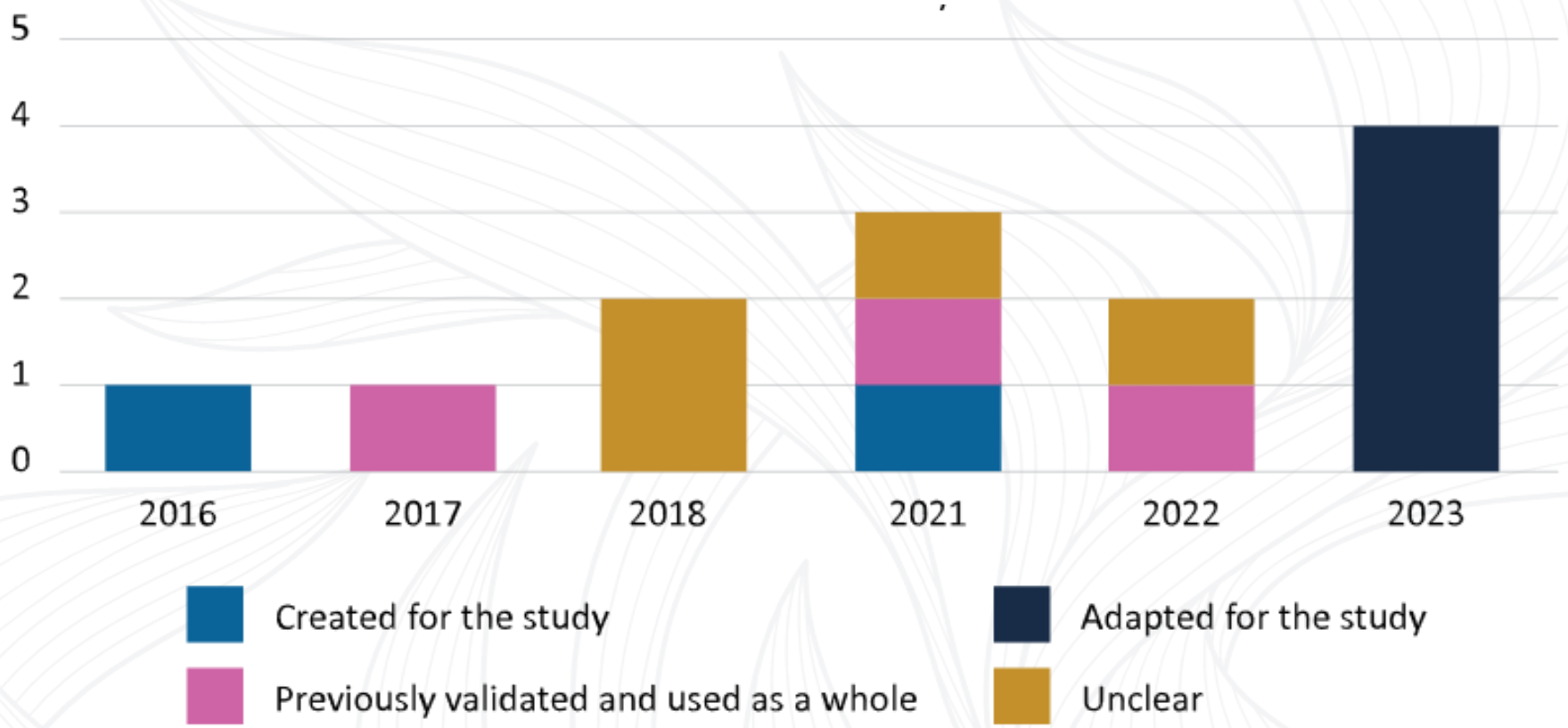
- **Provides insight** into how change is expected to happen
- **Highlights the assumed pathways** from interventions to long-term outcomes (e.g., behavior/norm change)
- **Allows examination of mechanisms of change** along the pathway of norms shifting

Most intervention evaluations used robust experimental or longitudinal designs, with a qualitative component.



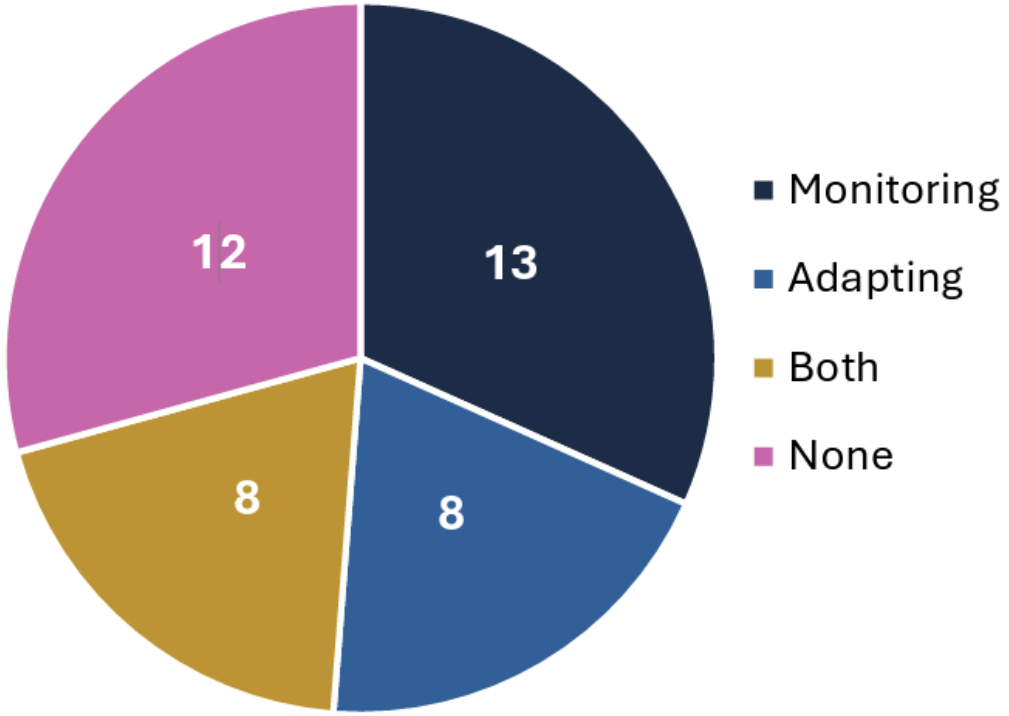
Faith and Cultural Champion Evaluation Designs (N=41); Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Many evaluations provided little detail on items, response options or questions used to measure norms, limiting comparability.



Norms Measures Used Within Faith and Cultural Champion Interventions (N=13)

More than 2/3 of the interventions referenced a monitoring and/or adaptive management strategy.



And yet, few documented how these strategies were implemented or used.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management Strategies Used in Faith and Cultural Champion Interventions (N=41)

Panel Discussion

Our Moderators and Speakers



Dr. Anjalee Kohli, *Moderator*

Applied Research Consultant



Dr. Osasuyi Dirisu

Executive Director, Policy Innovation Centre



Dr. Nancy Glass

Johns Hopkins School of Nursing



Dr. Anjalee Kohli
Moderator

Applied Research Consultant



Dr. Osasuyi Dirisu

Executive Director,
Policy Innovation Centre



Dr. Nancy Glass

Johns Hopkins School of Nursing

Panel Discussion

- What **tools or approaches** have you found helpful in capturing the complexity of norm change – including *if, how, and among whom* norms are shifting?
- In what ways have you **adapted your monitoring and learning systems** to track shifts in norms over time?
- In your experience, how can we ensure monitoring and evaluation frameworks **reflect realistic goals** of programs addressing norms shifting?

Questions & Answers



Closing Reflections

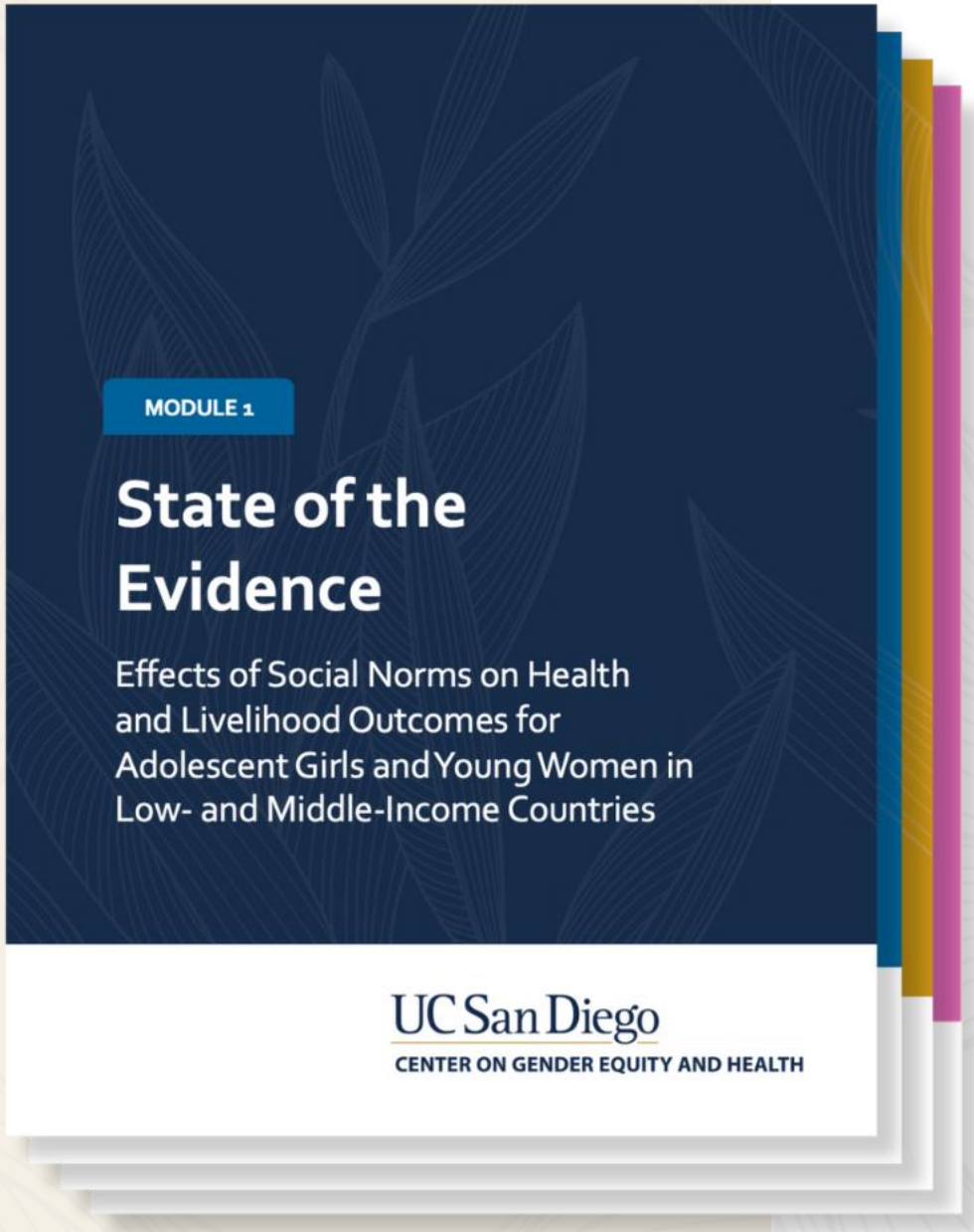


Keiko Valente

Program Officer,
Gates Foundation

5 Specific Actions You Can Take

1. Conduct **formative research** to inform design and evaluation, with greater attention to community-relevant norms and change pathways.
2. **Engage and equip champions** from the outset through participatory design, capacity strengthening and structured support.
3. Integrate **multiple norms- shifting mechanisms** and strengthen **implementation documentation.**
4. Expand **use of media**; engage **adolescents and their families to avoid risks and backlash.**
5. Design interventions with **scale and sustainability** in mind.



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Thank You!

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