Investing in Social Norms Shifting

An Advocacy Resource Pack

UC San Diego
CENTER ON GENDER EQUITY AND HEALTH

Why invest in social norms change?

- **Advances in health, education, and gender equity are at risk.**
- **Social norms shape the agency of adolescent girls and young women.**
- **Social norms programming is key to ensuring lasting progress.**
- **A proven strategy to protect past gains and build a future where women and girls can thrive.**

Now is the time to **tackle root causes** by forging new collaborations and investing in approaches to sustain and accelerate progress.

Even when services and products are available, restrictive social norms can prevent their use, requiring sustained investment in demand-side interventions.

Despite decades of investment and improved access, progress stalls without enabling normative environments. **Supportive norms amplify and sustain all other investments.**

Until recently, evidence on how to shift social norms has been limited, but **effective models and tools are now emerging and ready to scale.**

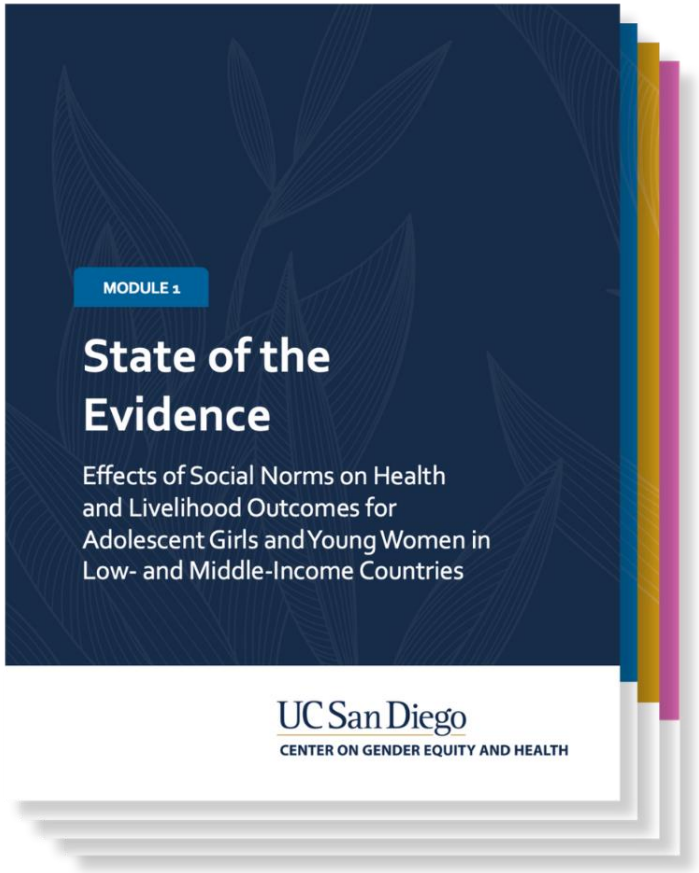
How this advocacy resource pack supports action and investment:

1. Provides concise sector-specific talking points, visuals, and evidence of successful social norms programs to support engagement with funders and mobilize resources for future research and programming.

2. Presents a high-level case for investment and explains how social norms are shaped by social systems.

3. Organizes advocacy resources by key outcome areas:
   - ✓ Sexual and Reproductive Health
   - ✓ Gender-Based Violence
   - ✓ Child, Early, and Forced Marriage
   - ✓ Women's Economic Empowerment

This advocacy resource pack draws on an evidence review conducted in 2025 which…



- **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.**

What you'll find in this resource advocacy pack:

Click any of the buttons below to navigate:



Social Norms **Overview**

What they are, why they matter, and where to learn more



Resources by Outcome Area

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Gender-Based Violence

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage

Women's Economic Empowerment



Social Norms **Repository Microsite**

A searchable repository of social norms research and intervention studies

Social Norms Overview

What are social and gender norms?

- **Social norms** are unwritten rules that define what is acceptable and expected in a community.

- **Gender norms** are a subset of social norms that shape expectations about behavior based on gender; they are learned early from family, peers, schools, and media.

Norms are created and reinforced through institutions such as schools, faith organizations, markets, and political systems—and shift with broader social and economic change.

Why do social and gender norms matter?

- Social norms shape nearly every aspect of adolescent girls' and young women's lives, influencing health, education, economic opportunity, and well-being.
- Some norms act directly (e.g., restricting mobility or decision-making); others indirectly reinforce gender roles and structural inequality.
- Deeply rooted norms sustain many everyday behaviors that limit progress.
- Social norms are interconnected.
  - For example, shifts in education-related norms can affect outcomes related to girls' economic participation, agency, and health.

How do social norms shift?

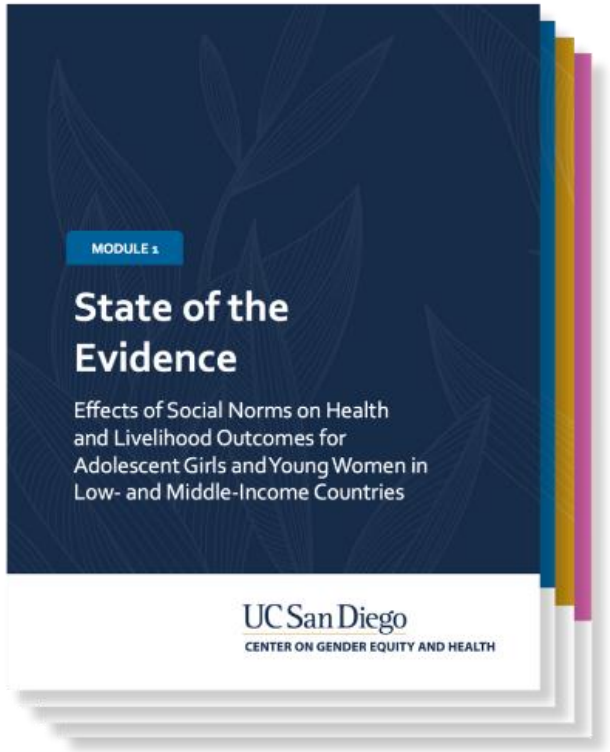
- Social norms are dynamic and evolve with changes in the surrounding social system.
- Effective norm change requires deep contextual understanding, community engagement, and multi-sector approaches.
- Change is rarely linear, calling for adaptive strategies and flexible funding.
- The strongest interventions address the broader social, economic, and legal systems that reinforce norms.

Social norms programs can:

- Be rigorously measured and evaluated.
- Be adapted, replicated, and scaled.
- Improve health and livelihoods outcomes in a program timeframe.

Key Social Norms Resources

Click to download or scan the QR codes



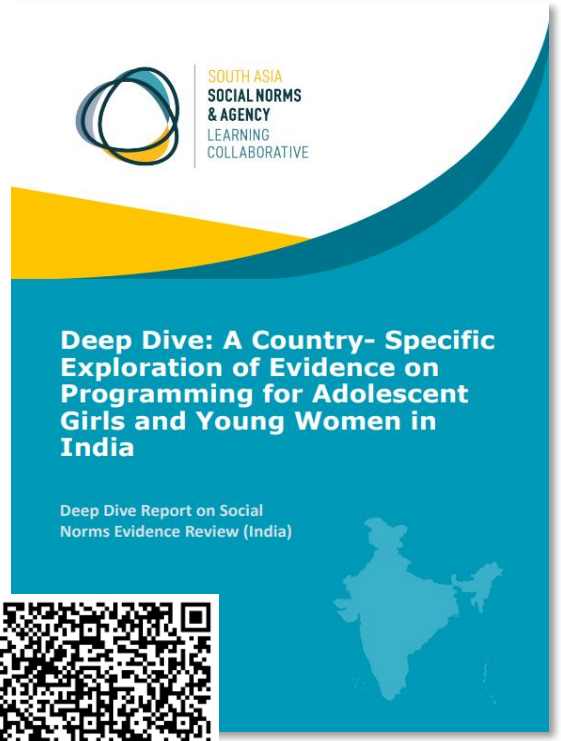
Report

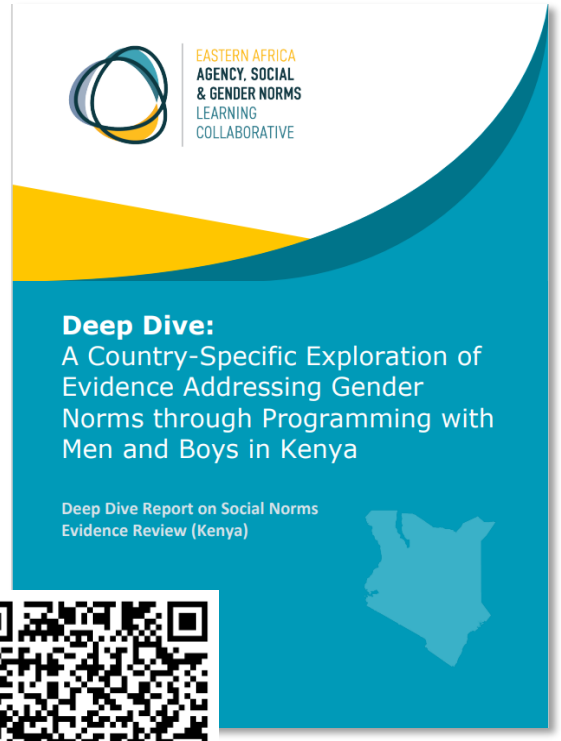


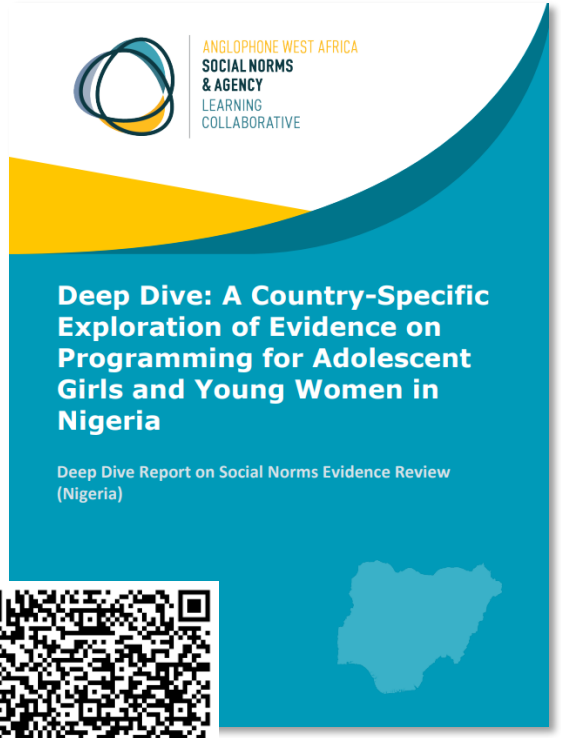
Articles

Country Specific Resources

Click below or scan the QR codes to download reports from India, Kenya, and Nigeria

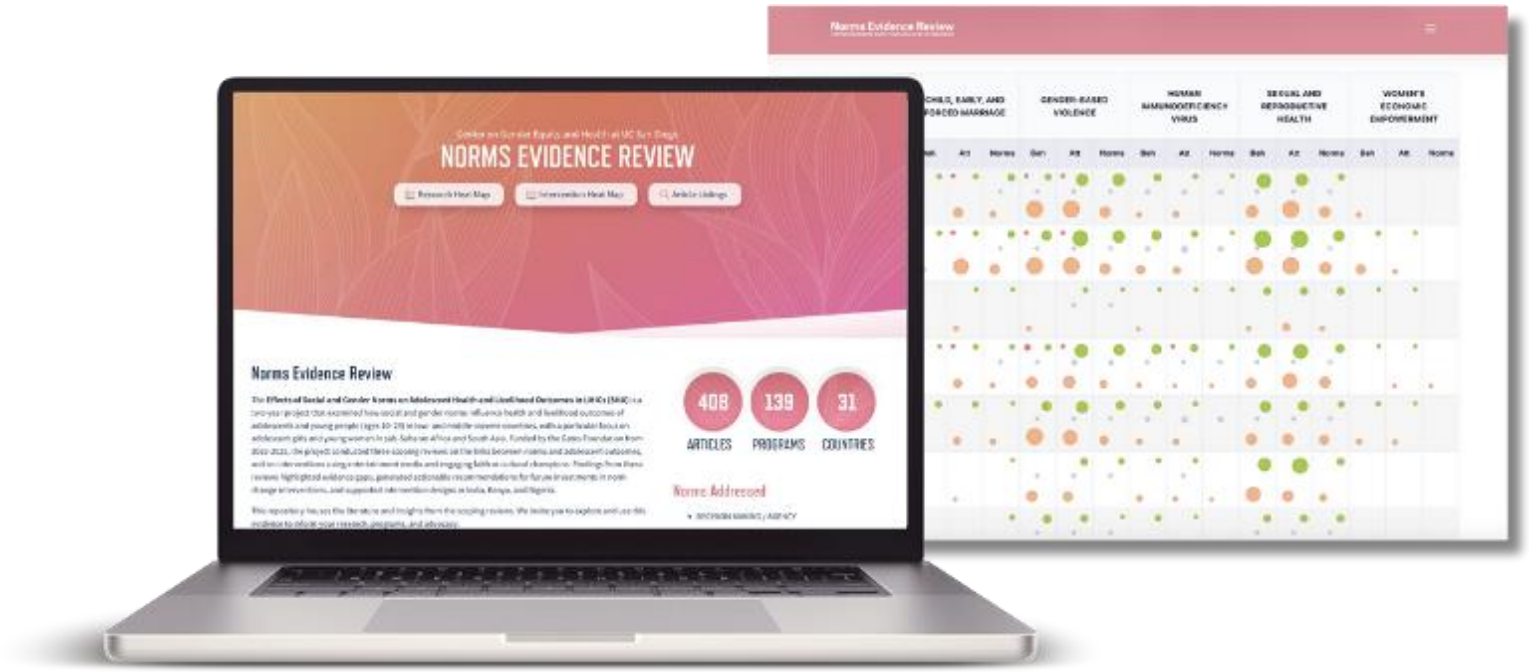






Social Norms Literature Repository

Click to access or scan the QR code



normsrepository.org

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Sexual and Reproductive Health

What does the evidence tell us about social norms-shifting interventions?

- **Resourcing social norms programming strengthens key sexual and reproductive health outcomes** including contraceptive use and intention to use.

- **Investments in shifting social norms also drive cross-sector gains,** more gender-equitable attitudes and behaviors and reduced gender-based violence.



See ***Programs in Action*** in the Results Bank to learn more.

Results Bank

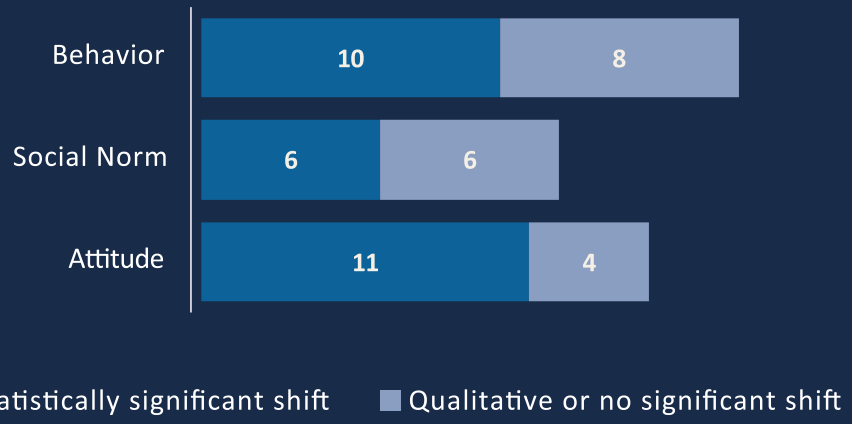
Sexual and Reproductive Health

Insight 1

Social norms programming successfully shifts sexual and reproductive health norms, behaviors and attitudes

ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA

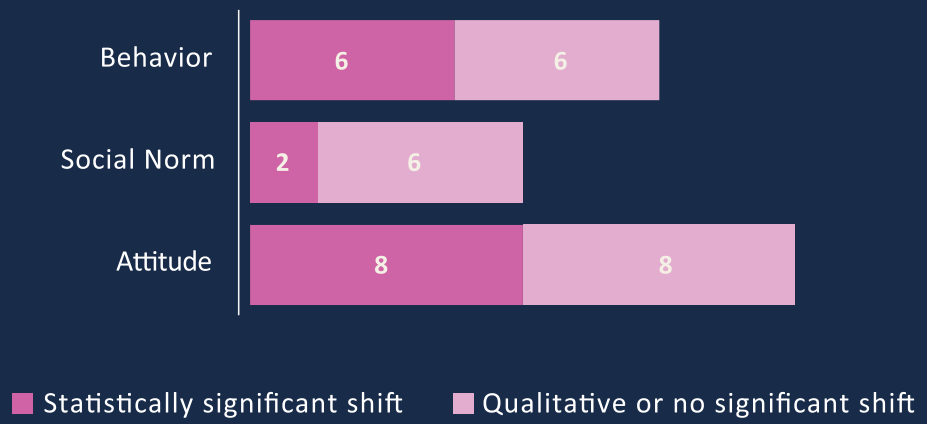
Number of Entertainment Interventions that Shifted Social Norms, Attitudes and Behaviors for SRH (N=31)*



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FAITH AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Number of Community Leader Interventions that Shifted Social Norms, Attitudes and Behaviors for SRH (N=27)*



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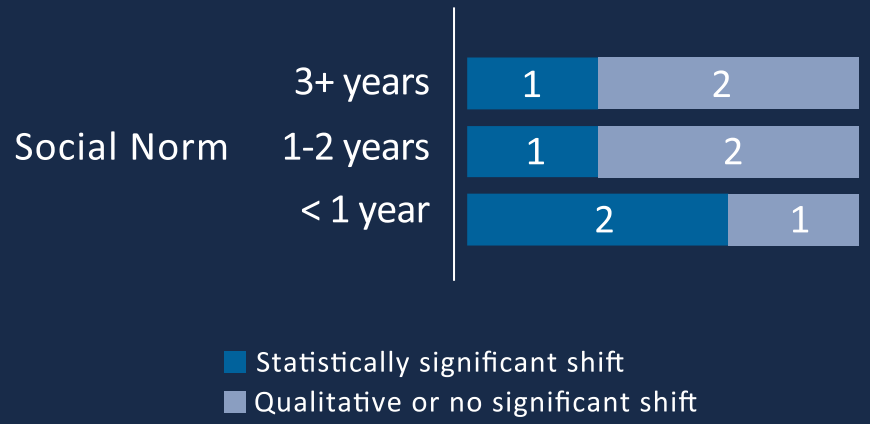
Click here to view animation

Insight 2

Short-duration entertainment media has proven power to shift norms in sexual and reproductive health.

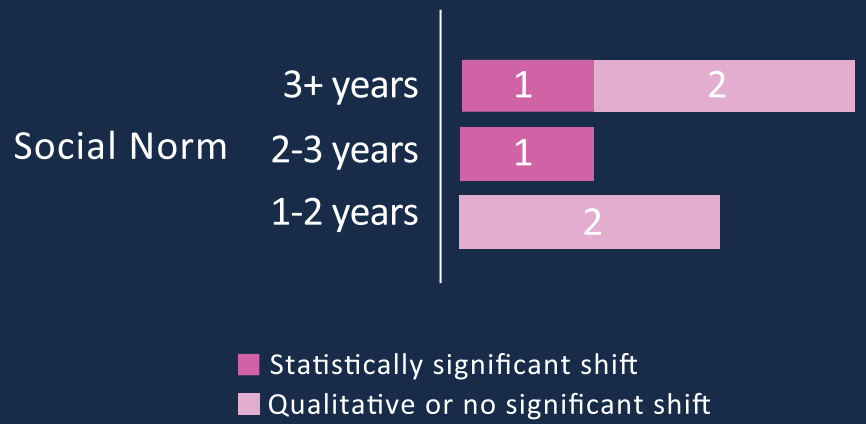
ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA

Positive Shifts in Social Norms in Entertainment Media Interventions by Duration (n=9)



FAITH AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Positive Shifts in Social Norms with Programs Engaging Faith and Community Leaders by Duration (n=6)



Click here to view animation

Evidence of Impact:
Successful Social Norms Programs

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Program in Action

Girls' Adolescent and Reproductive Rights: Information for Management and Action (GARIMA) | India

Program objectives: GARIMA, a community-based communication program, was designed to break the culture of silence around menstruation by initiating dialogue and sustaining conversations with peers, family, and community.

Program components: The program included audio-visual, print media and life skills activities, as well as peer-led group meetings and family engagement (e.g., mothers' and fathers' groups). Girls received storybooks, diaries, posters, and aprons, and participated in monthly sessions led by trained peer educators and frontline health workers.

Social norms addressed:
Body (menstruation, puberty changes)

Key Outcomes

Adolescent girls engaged in GARIMA were more likely to have:



Positive attitudes towards gender
(AOR: 1.48 (95% CI: 1.02 – 2.16))



Higher knowledge about puberty and reproductive parts
(AOR: 2.03 (95% CI: 1.31 – 3.15))

Higher levels of discussion and dialogue
(AOR: 1.41 (95% CI: 1.04 – 1.92)

Learn more: Girls' Adolescent and Reproductive Rights: Information for Management and Action (GARIMA) | Align Platform

Program in Action

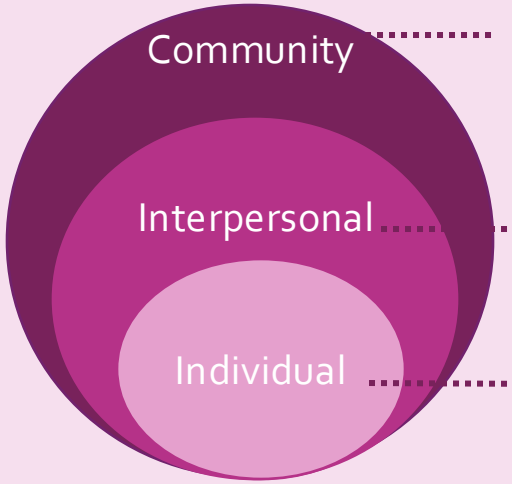
Family Health = Family Wealth | Uganda

Program objectives: Family Health = Family Wealth, a community-based program, was designed to increase contraceptive use among couples with an unmet need for family planning in rural Uganda.

Program components: The program included health system strengthening, facilitated group dialogue sessions, and education and skills training on couples' communication and financial planning.

Social norms addressed: Fertility; Gender

Key Outcomes



Increased acceptability of FP use (Wald $\chi 2 = 23.89$, p-value < 0.001)

Improved communication (Wald $\chi 2 = 78.81$, p-value < 0.001); more equitable relationship dynamics (Wald$\chi 2 = 13.40$, p-value = 0.001)

Greater knowledge (Wald $\chi 2 = 35.20$, p-value < 0.001) and intention to use FP (Wald $\chi 2 = 48.26$, p-value < 0.001); less endorsement of inequitable gender norms (Wald $\chi 2 = 19.46$, p-value < 0.001)

Learn more: Effects of a community-based, multi-level family planning intervention

Program in Action

Masculinité, Famille et Foi | Democratic Republic of Congo

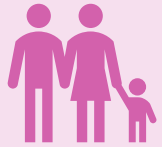
Program objectives: Building on the Transforming Masculinities approach, the program aimed to reduce intimate partner violence, increase shared couple decision-making, and improve family planning use among newly married couples and first-time parents 18-35 years.

Program components: The program included participatory workshops with faith leaders, community dialogues with young couples led by trained gender champions, public testimonies, sermons, and referral linkages to family planning and gender-based violence services.

Social norms addressed: Decision–making; Agency;Fertility; Gender; Gender-based violence

Key Outcomes

By the end of the program:



53.4% of non-pregnant couples were using contraception vs 45.3% of couples who did not participate (p-value = 0.038)



Both men and women reported less intimate partner violence; among men, the reduction was 9.8 percentage points (p-value = 0.018); among women, it was 8.0 percentage points (p-value = 0.049)

Learn more: www.tearfund.org/sexualviolence | Masculinité, Famille, et Foi - Institute for Reproductive Health



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Resourcing the Drivers of Change:
Making the Case for Investing in Social Norms to Improve Adolescent Girls and Young Women's Health and Well-Being

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

> *"Women pretend they don't know about family planning even though the health worker has explained it. Me too. I pretend I don't know anything about family planning. Besides the outreach worker, I have never spoken to anyone about it. No one knows I use family planning. I am hidden!"*
> — ***New mother participating in Tékponon Jikuagou, Mali (2011)***

Let's Imagine

Imagine a world where women and men could speak openly about contraception—where accurate information is shared, myths are challenged, and women's choices are respected. In such a world, women who choose contraception are supported, free to safeguard their health, and able to pursue the futures they envision. Family planning programs could then focus on what they do best: delivering safe, accessible, high-quality care. This is the promise of investing in social norms interventions—approaches that shift shared norms so women can make their own reproductive choices and partners can communicate and decide together.

This vision is already within reach. In Benin and Mali, the **Tékponon Jikuagou** "light touch" social network program sparked conversations about social norms, breaking the silence around family planning. Before the program, many people hid their contraceptive use for fear of gossip or criticism. In just two years, couples were openly discussing family size, men accompanied wives to clinics, and communities challenged misinformation. Results were clear: women and men reached were **1.5 times more likely to use modern contraception** (1.12-1.90 for women, 0.77-1.33 for men; p<0.01), and men who believed peers supported family planning **were 3.5 times more likely to seek services** (2.41-5.00, p<0.001).

Social norms programming is not an add-on to health services—it is the key to lasting progress. Decades of investment in behavior change and demand creation have advanced access, but without changing community norms, progress stalls. When norms shift—when stigma is replaced by dialogue, and when women and couples can act on their choices—other investments are amplified and sustained.

Click or scan to download the

Sexual and Reproductive Health Advocacy Brief

Gender-Based Violence

What does the evidence tell us about social norms-shifting interventions?

- **Resourcing social norms programs to prevent gender-based violence reduces** acceptance and perpetration, increases bystander intervention, and strengthens community commitment to gender equity and safety.
- **Investing in norms shifting also delivers spillover benefits across health, well-being and livelihoods, supporting education, gender equity, and economic participation.**



See ***Programs in Action*** in the Results Bank to learn more.



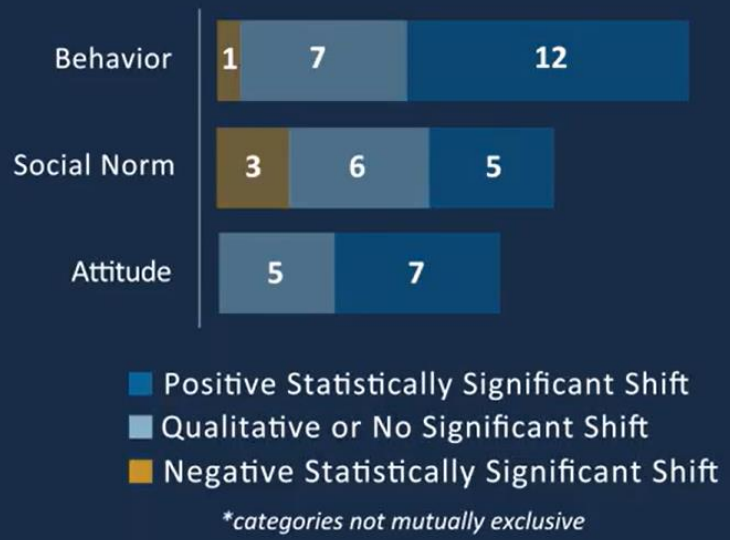
Results Bank
Gender-Based Violence

Insight

Social norms programming successfully shifts gender-based violence norms, behaviors, and attitudes.

ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA

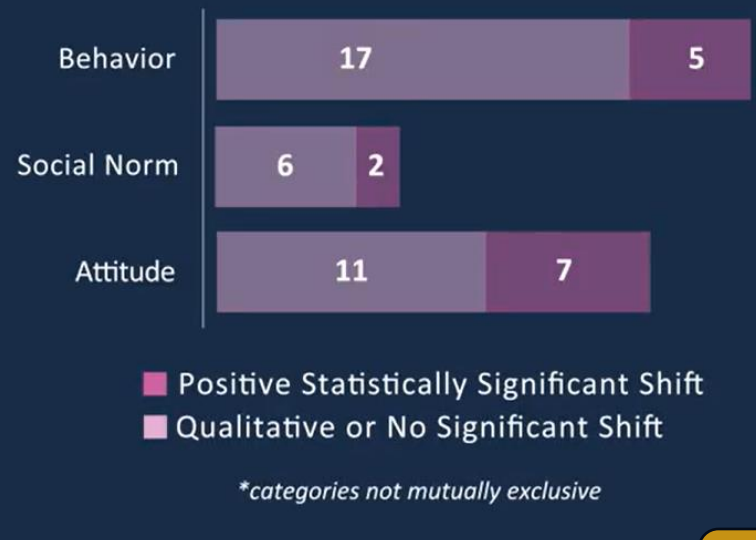
Number of Entertainment Media interventions that shifted norms, attitudes, and behaviors for Gender-Based Violence Outcomes (n=46)*



*categories not mutually exclusive

FAITH AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Number of Faith and Community Leader interventions that shifted norms, attitudes, and behaviors for Gender-Based Violence Outcomes (n=48)*



*categories not mutually exclusive

Click here to view animation

Evidence of Impact:
Successful Social Norms Programs

Gender-Based Violence

Program in Action

Change Starts at Home | Nepal

Program objectives: Change Starts at Home, a 40-week intervention engaging couples, families and community leaders, was designed to shift attitudes, social norms, and behaviors contributing to intimate partner violence among couples.

Program components: A weekly radio drama with listening and discussion groups, couples' sessions, and community engagement activities.

Social norms addressed: Gender, Gender-based violence

Key Outcomes

For couples who engaged in Change Starts at Home, results from the mid-line evaluation indicated that relative to control sites…





- Intimate partner violence decreased overall by 39% (SE= 0.09, p-value < 0.05)
- Psychological intimate partner violence decreased by 35% (SE= 0.08, p-value < 0.05)
- Sexual intimate partner violence decreased by 27% (SE= 0.07, p-value < 0.05)
- Physical intimate partner violence decreased by 25% (SE= 0.07, p-value < 0.05)

Learn more: Empowering women and preventing partner violence in Nepal

Program in Action

Masculinities, Faith and Peace | Nigeria

Program objectives: Adapted from Transforming Masculinities, the intervention engaged young couples, religious leaders, and congregations to reduce sexual and gender-based violence, increase healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies, and improve inter-religious relationships.

Program components: Eight-week community dialogues, faith-based workshops, and health education sessions, drawing on scriptural reflections on gender equality, gender - based violence, positive masculinities, family planning, and interfaith relationships.

Social norms addressed: Fertility, Gender, Gender-based violence

Key Outcomes

By the end of the program:

- Participating congregations showed significantly greater reductions in emotional violence perpetrated by men and experiences reported by women compared to those in non-participating congregations (PP Diff: 22.2, p-value < 0.05)
- The proportion of individuals in participating congregations who believed it was acceptable for a husband to use violence against his wife decreased significantly compared to those in non-participating congregations (PP Diff: 14.3, p-value < 0.01)

Learn more:

Masculinities, Faith and Peace - Institute for Reproductive Health | Tools and guides: Changing gender norms: Masculinities, Faith and Peace - Tearfund Learn

Program in Action

Communities Care | Somalia

Program objectives: Communities Care integrates gender-based violence prevention and response--aiming to strengthen community-based care for survivors of sexual violence and shift harmful social norms that perpetuate violence against women and girls in conflict-affected settings.

Program components: A structured 15-week facilitated dialogue process alongside community-led actions and multisectoral service strengthening. Public events, media messaging, and advocacy efforts reinforced the dialogues, while training was provided to service providers to improve survivor-centered care.

Social norms addressed: Gender, Gender-based violence, Sex/sexuality

Key Outcomes

Evaluation results showed positive shifts away from norms that approved of:

- Sexual violence (Coeff : -0.214, p-value < 0.001)
- Using violence for protection of family honor (Coeff: -0.558, p-value < 0.001)
- A husbands' right to use violence (Coeff: -0.309, p-value = 0.003)

Learn more: Communities-Care



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Resourcing the Drivers of Change:
Making the Case for Investing in Social Norms to Improve Adolescent Girls and Young Women's Health and Well-Being

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

> *"Beating is an acceptable means of instilling discipline and good manners in wives by most men, and therefore young fathers are expected to beat their wives to discipline them but also to show that they are the men in the home."*
> — ***Young father participating in REAL Fathers, Uganda (2025)***

Let's Imagine

This quote highlights the reality many women and girls face today, where violence is often seen as acceptable or even expected. Imagine a world in which harmful behaviors are challenged, violence is never tolerated, survivors are believed and supported, and men and fathers, together with their families and communities, stand united against violence. A world where accurate information replaces myths, and women and girls are safe in every space—at home, in schools, and in workplaces—free to pursue the futures they envision. **This is the promise of investing in social norms interventions: shifting social norms so that violence is never justified, and everyone can live free from fear.**

This vision is already within reach. In Rwanda, Indashyikirwa brought this promise to life, raising awareness of physical and sexual violence, shifting attitudes, and promoting behavior change through couples and community activism. In just two years, the results were clear: women who engaged in the program were **94% less likely to accept or justify intimate partner violence** (aRR: -0.94; 95% CI: -1.04, -0.84), and both men and women in the program **were 54% and 44%, respectively, less likely to report physical or sexual violence—either experienced or perpetrated** than those who did not engage in the program (men: aRR: 0.54; 95% CI: 0.38, 0.75; women: aRR: 0.44; 95% CI: 0.31, 0.59). Indashyikirwa also led to reduced interpersonal conflict, increased communication and trust among partners, and reduced violence against children.

Social norms programming is not an add-on to violence prevention and response—it is core to lasting progress. Decades of investment in advocacy, service delivery, and policy have achieved significant gains, but without addressing deeply-rooted beliefs and social expectations, progress risks of stalling. Programs that tackle harmful norms and shift underlying social norms amplify and sustain other investments, enabling women and girls to live freely and make choices without stigma, threat, or violence.

Click or scan to download the

Gender-Based Violence Advocacy Brief

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage

What does the evidence tell us about social norms-shifting interventions?

- **Resourcing social norms programs can reduce and prevent child, early, and forced marriages**, by lowering acceptance of the practice and increasing the socially acceptable age at marriage.

- **Investments in shifting social norms related to child, early, and forced marriage can also accelerate progress in education, gender equity, and economic participation outcomes.**



See ***Programs in Action*** in the Results Bank to learn more.

Results Bank

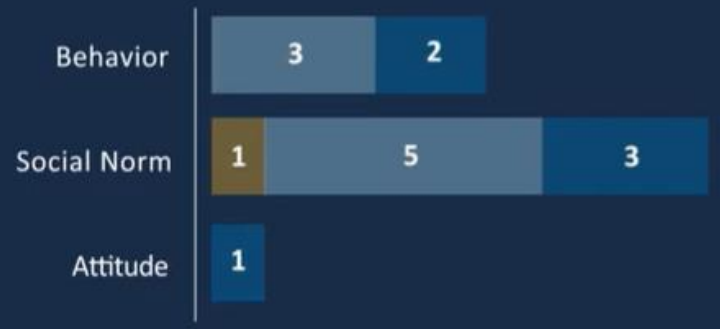
Child, Early, and Forced Marriage

Insight

Social norms programming successfully shifts child, early, and forced marriage norms, behaviors and attitudes.

ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA

Number of Entertainment Media Interventions that shifted norms, attitudes, and behaviors for Child, Early and Forced Marriage Outcomes (n=15)

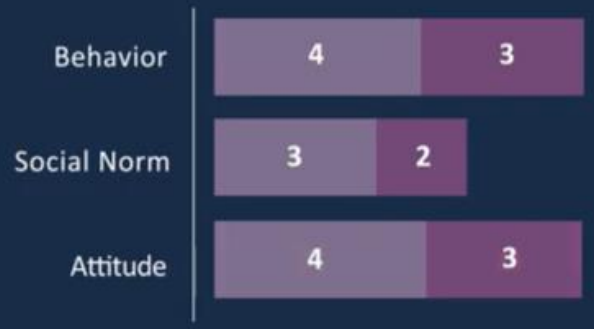


- Positive Statistically Significant Shift
- Qualitative or No Significant Shift
- Negative Statistically Significant Shift

**categories not mutually exclusive*

FAITH AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Number of Faith and Community Leader interventions that shifted norms, attitudes, and behaviors for Child, Early and Forced Marriage Outcomes (n=19)



- Positive Statistically Significant Shift
- Qualitative or No Significant Shift

**categories not mutually exclusive*

Click here to view animation

Evidence of Impact:
Successful Social Norms Programs

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage

Program in Action

Sista2Sista | Zimbabwe

Program objectives: Sista2Sista is designed to increase knowledge and the use of services related to HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence.

Program components: Sista2Sista girls-only clubs deliver a 40-exercise curriculum over one year for adolescent girls and young women ages 10–24, covering communication, gender norms, power, sexual and reproductive health, consent, and financial literacy, as well as mentorship and support.

Social norms addressed: Education; Fertility; Gender-based violence; HIV; Marriage

Key Outcomes

Results from an evaluation using program data from 91,612 adolescent girls who participated in Sista2Sista from 2013 to 2019 showed that completing the entire curriculum:



Reduced the likelihood of child marriage by nearly 60.0% (p-value < 0.001)



Reduced the likelihood of adolescent pregnancy by 62.0% (p-value < 0.01)



Increased the likelihood of girls returning to school (1.41 OR 95% CI 1.18–1.69), using contraception (1.38 OR 95% CI 1.21–1.56), and reporting sexual abuse (1.76 OR 95% CI 1.17–2.66)

Learn more: UNFPA Zimbabwe | Sista2Sista Mentors Manual | UNFPA Zimbabwe | UNFPA Sista2Sista Clubs helping young girls get their lives on track

Program in Action

Bangladeshi Association for Life Skills, Income, and Knowledge for Adolescents | Bangladesh

Program objectives: The Bangladeshi Association for Life Skills, Income, and Knowledge for Adolescents, a skill-building program for rural adolescent girls, was designed to empower girls to delay marriage.

Program components: During an 18- month period, girls received educational support, gender-rights awareness and livelihoods training.

Social norms addressed: Decision-making/Agency; Economic opportunities; Education; Fertility; Gender; Gender-based violence; HIV; Marriage; Sex; Systemic

Key Outcomes

Evaluation results at the end of the program showed that relative to control communities:

↓ Girls were one-third less likely to be married as children (OR 0.69–0.77; p-value ≤ 0.001) and those who were single at the beginning of the study were one-fourth less likely to be married by the end of the study (OR 0.76-0.78; p-value ≤ 0.01)

Girls who received educational support or training on gender rights were 31% less likely to be married as children (p-value ≤ 0.001)

Learn more: "Delaying child marriage through community-based skills-development pro" by Sajeda Amin, Johana Ahmed et al.

Program in Action

Girls' Holistic Development | Senegal

Program objectives: Girls' Holistic Development aims to shift norms, attitudes, and behaviors related to girls' education, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and female genital cutting.

Program components: The program trains grandmothers and teachers to counsel girls ages 10-14 years and their caregivers, and to facilitate community activities that catalyze intergenerational dialogue and collective action.

Social norms addressed: Education; Fertility; Marriage

Key Outcomes

In communities that participated in the program, results from a realist evaluation indicated that, relative to control sites:

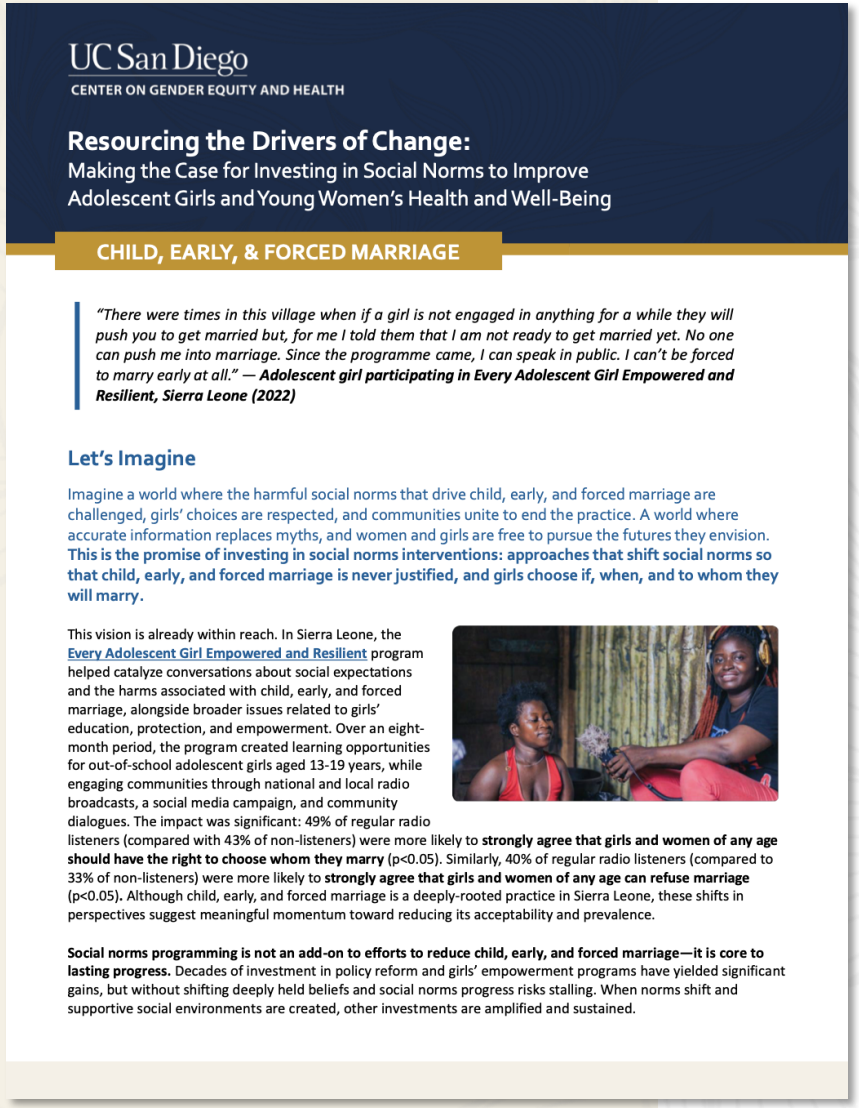


Very young girls were significantly more likely to believe that no parents in their community supported marrying girls under 16 years (56.6%) compared with girls in control sites (28.4%) (p-value < 0.01)



Caregivers were less likely to report intending to marry their adolescent daughter before age 16 (13.3%) than caregivers in control sites (27.9%) (p-value <0.05)

Learn more: Programs – Grandmotherproject



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Resourcing the Drivers of Change:
Making the Case for Investing in Social Norms to Improve Adolescent Girls and Young Women's Health and Well-Being

CHILD, EARLY, & FORCED MARRIAGE

> *"There were times in this village when if a girl is not engaged in anything for a while they will push you to get married but, for me I told them that I am not ready to get married yet. No one can push me into marriage. Since the programme came, I can speak in public. I can't be forced to marry early at all."* — ***Adolescent girl participating in Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient, Sierra Leone (2022)***

Let's Imagine

Imagine a world where the harmful social norms that drive child, early, and forced marriage are challenged, girls' choices are respected, and communities unite to end the practice. A world where accurate information replaces myths, and women and girls are free to pursue the futures they envision. **This is the promise of investing in social norms interventions: approaches that shift social norms so that child, early, and forced marriage is never justified, and girls choose if, when, and to whom they will marry.**

This vision is already within reach. In Sierra Leone, the Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient program helped catalyze conversations about social expectations and the harms associated with child, early, and forced marriage, alongside broader issues related to girls' education, protection, and empowerment. Over an eight-month period, the program created learning opportunities for out-of-school adolescent girls aged 13-19 years, while engaging communities through national and local radio broadcasts, a social media campaign, and community dialogues. The impact was significant: 49% of regular radio listeners (compared with 43% of non-listeners) were more likely to **strongly agree that girls and women of any age should have the right to choose whom they marry** ($p<0.05$). Similarly, 40% of regular radio listeners (compared to 33% of non-listeners) were more likely to **strongly agree that girls and women of any age can refuse marriage** ($p<0.05$). Although child, early, and forced marriage is a deeply-rooted practice in Sierra Leone, these shifts in perspectives suggest meaningful momentum toward reducing its acceptability and prevalence.

Social norms programming is not an add-on to efforts to reduce child, early, and forced marriage—it is core to lasting progress. Decades of investment in policy reform and girls' empowerment programs have yielded significant gains, but without shifting deeply held beliefs and social norms progress risks stalling. When norms shift and supportive social environments are created, other investments are amplified and sustained.

Click or scan to download the

Preventing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Advocacy Brief

Women’s Economic Empowerment

What does the evidence tell us about social norms-shifting interventions?

- **Resourcing social norms programs boosts women's economic empowerment,** including workforce participation, productivity, and wages, and strengthens household communication, decision-making and agency.
- **Norms shifting investments can also drive broader gains** including reduced gender-based violence, improved education, and greater gender equity.
- Despite these promising results, **evidence for standalone women's economic empowerment norms shifting programs is limited.**



See ***Programs in Action*** in the Results Bank to learn more.



Results Bank

Women's Economic Empowerment

Evidence of Impact:
Successful Social Norms Programs

Women's Economic Empowerment

Program in Action

Do Kadam Barabari Ki Ore | India

Program objectives: The Do Kadam Barabari Ki Ore (Two Steps Towards Equality) program aimed to promote women's economic empowerment and improve outcomes related to intimate partner violence and gender equity among married women 18-49 years participating in self-help empowerment groups.

Program components: Financial literacy and links to livelihood training opportunities, as well as sessions on gender discrimination and the acceptability of violence against women and girls.

Social norms addressed: Gender; Gender-based violence, Systemic

Key Outcomes

Evaluation results at the end of the program showed that:



More self-help empowerment group members from intervention than control sites reported being informed about livelihood training (69–72% versus 11%), employment (38–46% versus 6%), and loan opportunities (59–65% versus 27%) (p-value ≤ .05)



Control over economic resources increased significantly among women in intervention compared to control sites (p-value ≤ .05)

Learn more: c3india.org/do-kadam-barabari-ki-ore | Do Kadam Barabari Ki Ore (Do Kadam) [Two Steps Towards Equality] | Align Platform

Program in Action

Sammanit Jeevan | Nepal

Program objectives: Sammanit Jeevan (One Community One Family) aimed to reduce gender-based violence, shift harmful social and gender norms, and improve the economic conditions of young married women.

Program components: Over six months, 20 three-hour sessions for married women and their husbands, focusing on norms around joint decision-making and gendered roles, economic empowerment, and supporting women-led income-generating activities.

Social norms addressed: Gender

Key Outcomes

Results from a modified interrupted time series and qualitative research study showed that among women participating in the program:

- The percentage of women who reported earnings in the past month increased from 21% at baseline to 65% at endline (p-value < 0.001)
- The percentage of young women who borrowed food or money decreased by 25% from baseline to endline (p-value < 0.001)
- Women's efforts to find work significantly increased over time (p-value < 0.001), and they reported feeling less shame about unemployment (p-value < 0.001)

Learn more: What Works - VSO International - Nepal

Program in Action

Breakthrough Generation Initiative | The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, & Mali

Program objectives: The Breakthrough Generation Initiative aimed to promote women's economic empowerment and improve outcomes related to gender-based violence, child, early, and forced marriage, and sexual and reproductive health.

Program components: Community mobilization, training activities, group dialogues, and radio broadcasts.

Social norms addressed: Economic Opportunities; Education; Body; Fertility; Decision-making/Agency; Gender; Gender-based violence, Marriage

Key Outcomes

Evaluation results at the end of the program showed that:



There were significant increases in the proportions of women engaged in income-generating activities following the program, rising from 73% to 87% in Guinea and from 36% to 69% in Guinea-Bissau (p-value ≤ 0.05)



There were significant shifts in social norms related to female genital cutting: prior to the intervention, the majority of respondents believed their communities approved or tolerated the practice (79% in Guinea-Bissau, 90% in Mali, and 94% in Guinea). After the program, more than half of respondents in each country reported that community members would now attempt to stop the practice (p-value ≤ 0.05)

Learn more: Home | Tostan International



UC San Diego
CENTER ON GENDER EQUITY AND HEALTH

Resourcing the Drivers of Change:
Making the Case for Investing in Social Norms to Improve Adolescent Girls and Young Women's Health and Well-Being

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

"I buy chickens and sell them after they multiply. In the same way, I rear goats. Only today, I have bought a new goat. There's surplus grain in the house that I sell. Those are the things that I have been doing. These have been quite successful. We have been able to buy what we want. And we have been able to promptly sell what we want to sell. We have been making enough money to meet our needs."

— Young mother participating in Sammanit Jeevan, Nepal (2017)

Let's Imagine

Imagine a world where the social norms that prevent women's economic opportunities are openly questioned, where women's choices are respected, and where communities fully recognize the unpaid value of care work and the many benefits of women's participation in the workforce. A world where facts replace myths, and women and girls are free to pursue the futures they choose. **This is the promise of investing in social norms interventions: shifting social norms so girls and women can choose whether and how to participate in the workforce and decide how to use their earnings.**

This vision is already within reach. In Nepal, Sammanit Jeevan helped catalyze conversations about social norms and improve married women's economic conditions. Over six months, the program offered 20 three-hour sessions for married women and their husbands, focusing on norms around joint decision-making and gendered roles, economic empowerment, and supporting women-led income-generating activities. The results were striking: from baseline (pre-intervention) to 18 months post-baseline, **there was a threefold increase in the proportion of women who reported having had earnings in the past month** ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.001$), and significantly **more women reported having savings in the past month** ($\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.001$).

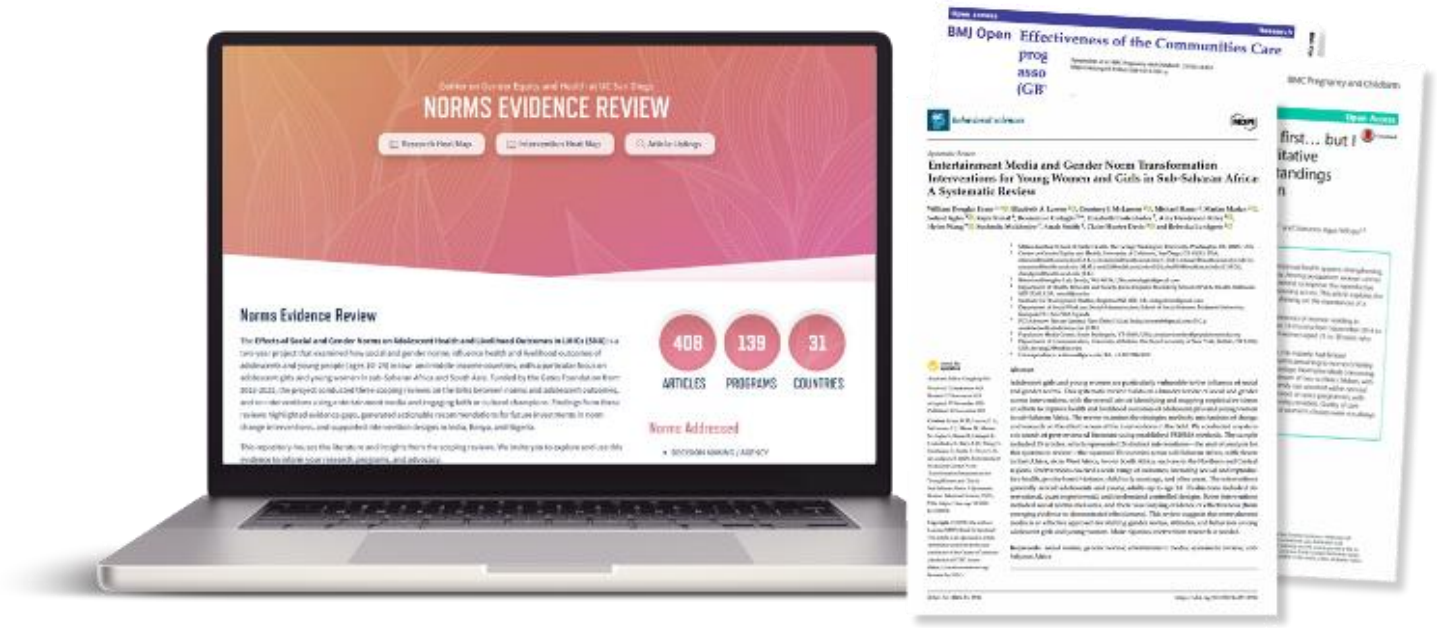
Social norms programming is not an add-on to efforts to improve women's economic empowerment—it is essential for lasting progress. Decades of investment in policy reform and empowerment programs have led to important gains, but when deeply held beliefs and social norms don't shift, progress stalls. When norms change and supportive social environments take hold, other investments become more effective and sustainable.

Click or scan to download the

Women's Economic Empowerment Advocacy Brief

Social Norms Repository Microsite

The **Social Norms Repository** puts the evidence you need—just a click away!



Use it to:

- ✓ Find evidence on *what works, where,* and for *which outcomes*
- ✓ *Build the case* for investing in social norms research and programming
- ✓ I*dentify exemplar programs* to invest in, adapt, and scale

normsrepository.org

About the Repository

This microsite was developed from the resources identified during the Social Norms Evidence Review.

The site includes three core components:

- **Research Articles Heatmap** – exploratory research (not evaluating an intervention or change over time)
- **Intervention Articles Heatmap** – evaluations of norms-shifting interventions
- **All Articles Page** – full listing of all included articles

normsrepository.org

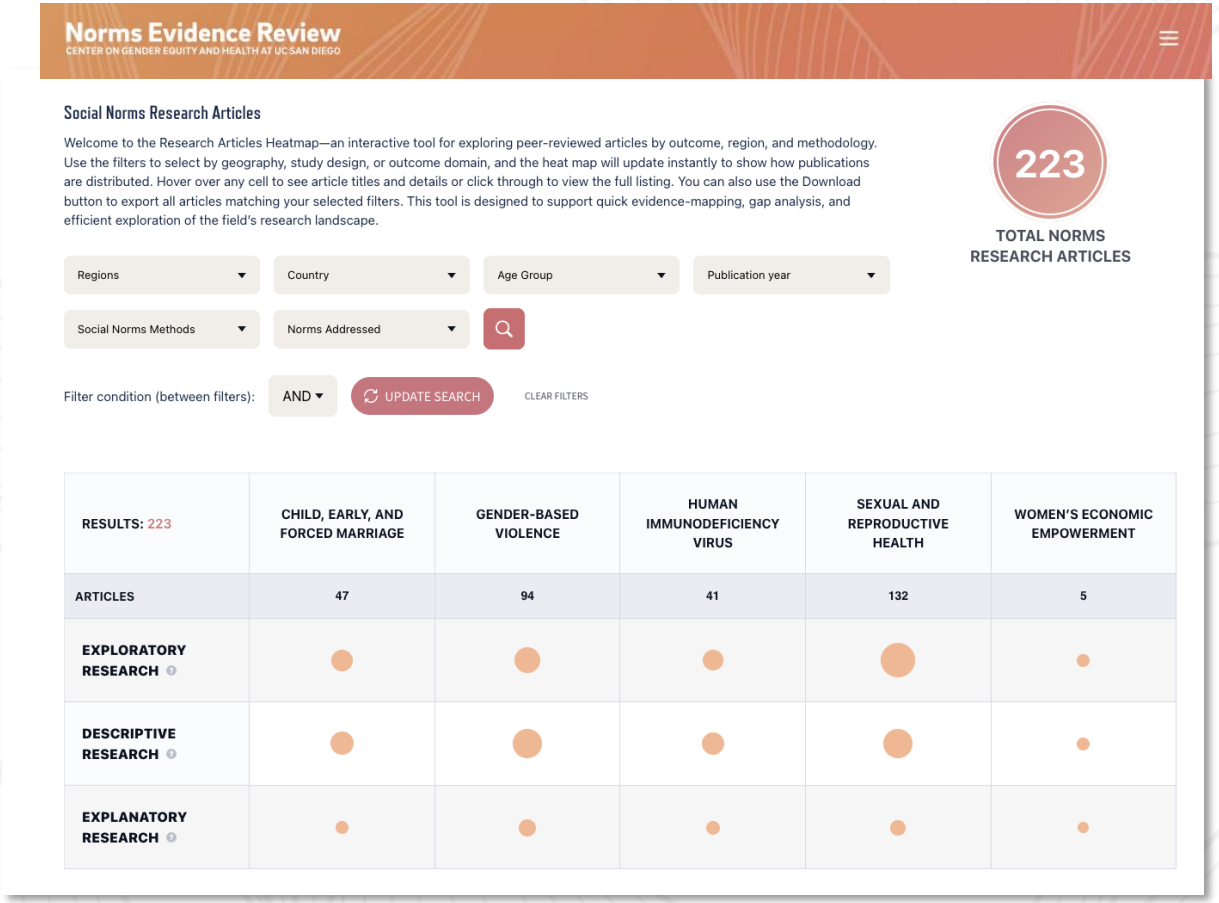
How to Use

Research Articles Heatmap

The **Research Articles Heatmap** is an interactive tool to explore peer-reviewed evidence by outcome, region, and methodology. Use filters (geography, study design, outcome domain) to instantly update the heatmap and see where research is concentrated or limited. Hover over cells for article titles and details, click through for the full listing, or download filtered results.

Designed for rapid evidence mapping, gap analysis, and efficient exploration of the research landscape.

Explore Research Articles



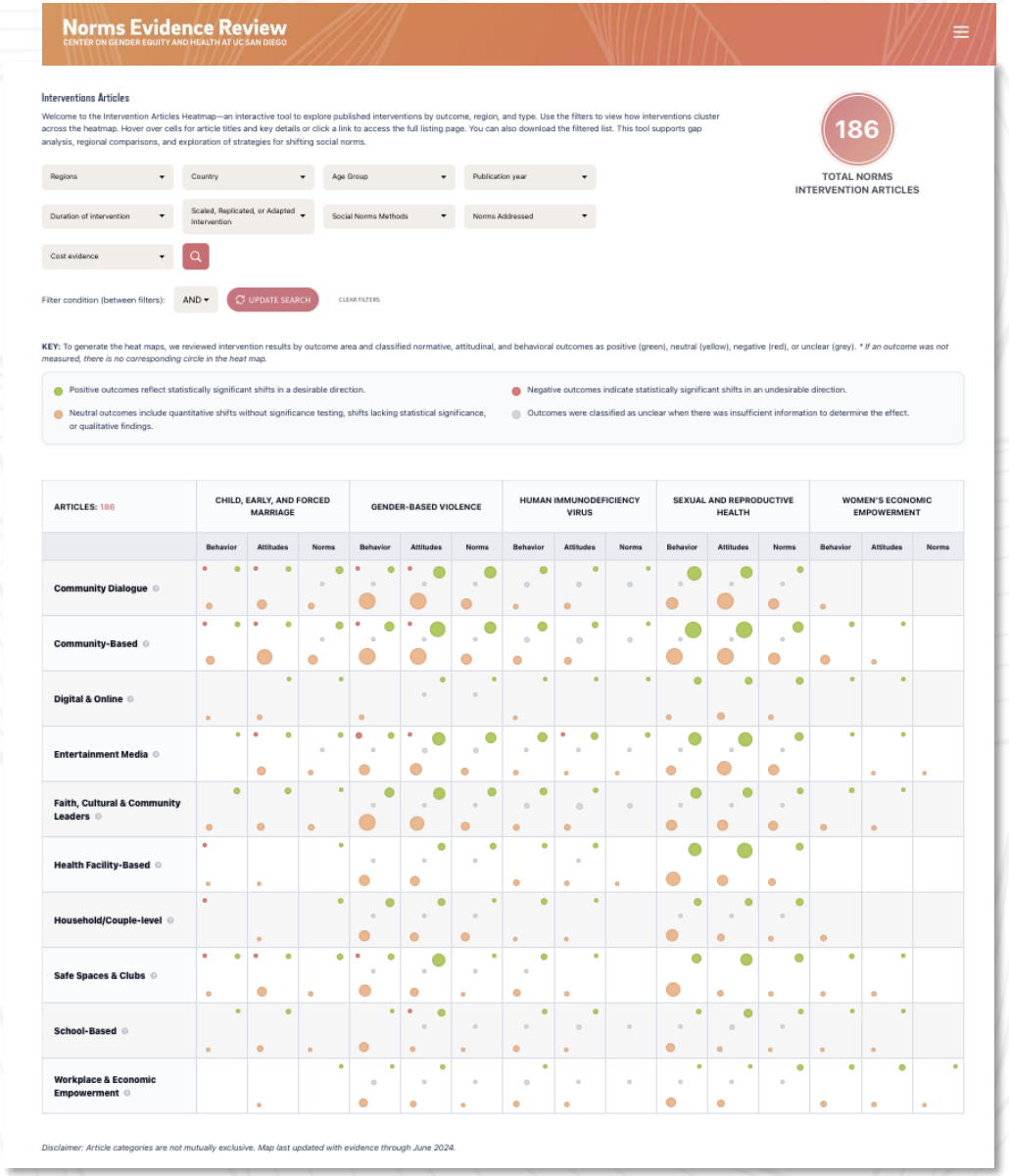
How to Use

Interventions Heatmap

The **Intervention Articles Heatmap** is an interactive tool for exploring published norms-shifting interventions by outcome, region, and intervention type. Use filters to see where interventions cluster across the evidence base. Hover over cells for article titles and details, click through to the full listing, or download filtered results.

Designed to support gap analysis, regional comparisons, and exploration of intervention strategies.

Explore Intervention Articles



How to Use

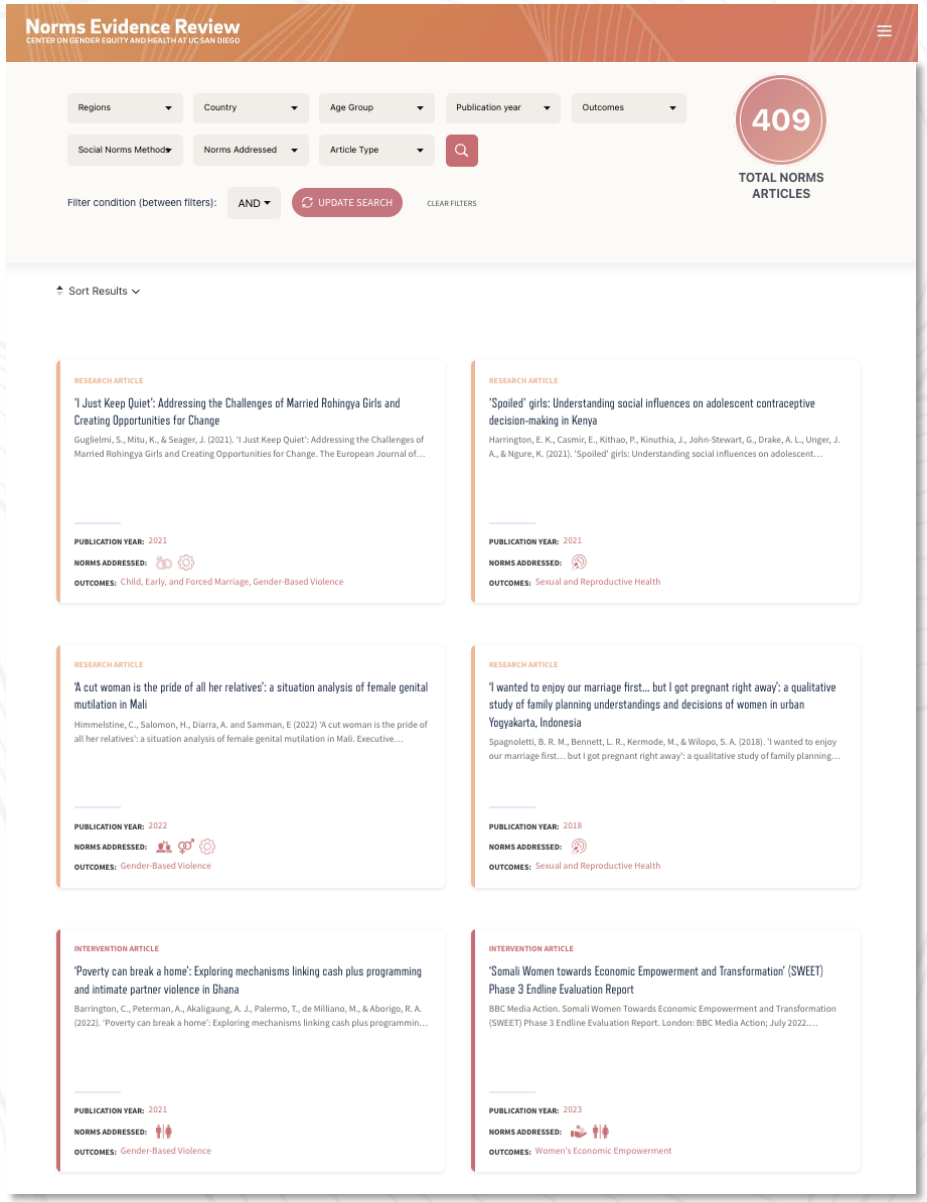
Articles Listing and Search Page

The **Articles Listing** page is a complete, searchable catalog of all articles included in the Social Norms Evidence Review.

Use search and filters to quickly find articles by outcome, population, region, or approach, then open individual records to review summaries and key details.

This page supports rapid sourcing for proposals, program design, and research synthesis, and makes it easy to download or extract tailored evidence for specific needs.

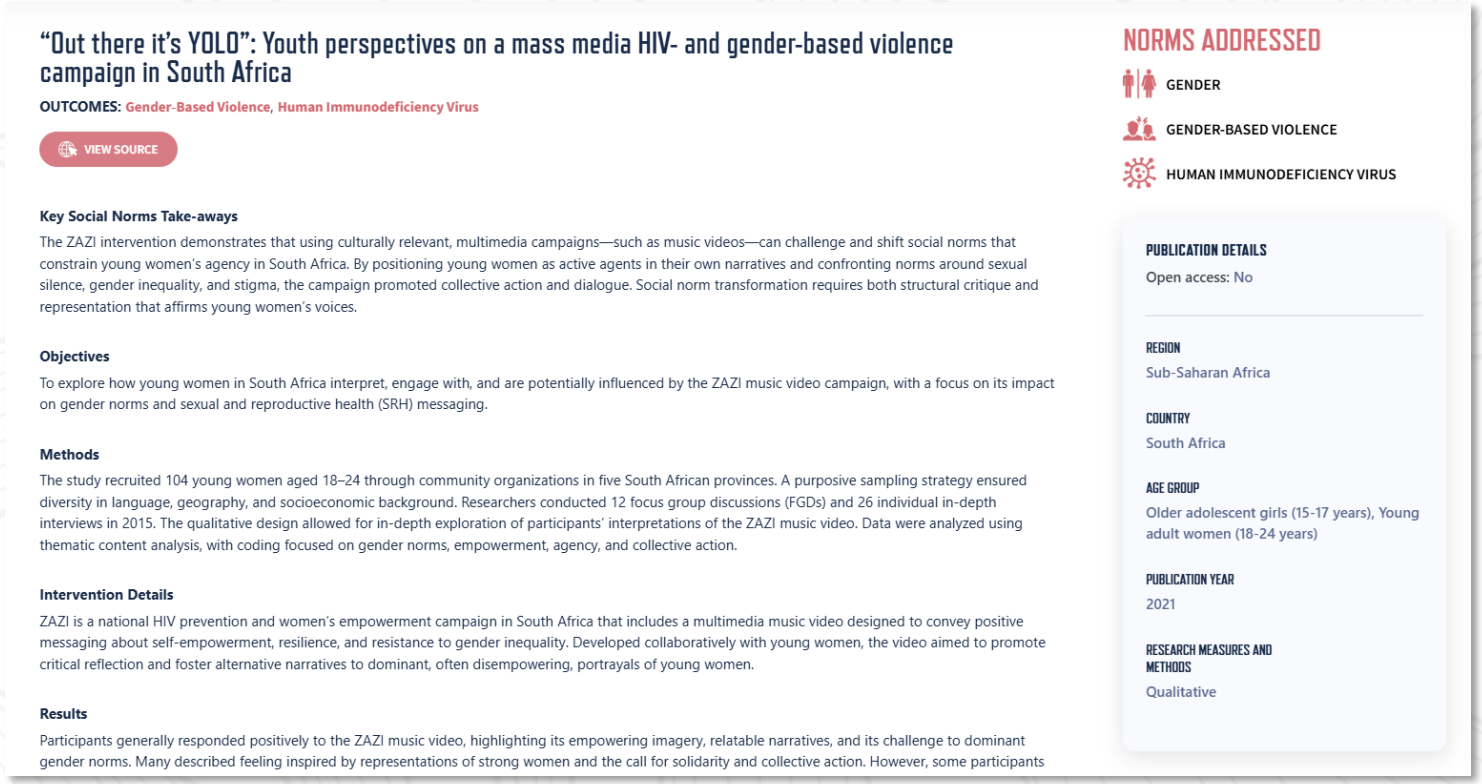
Explore Articles Listing



How to Use

Individual Article Pages

Each individual article has its own detail page with a synthesized norms-focused summary, a specific highlight on which norms were of focus for the article, and where to find full article information.



"Out there it's YOLO": Youth perspectives on a mass media HIV- and gender-based violence campaign in South Africa

OUTCOMES: Gender-Based Violence, Human Immunodeficiency Virus

VIEW SOURCE

Key Social Norms Take-aways

The ZAZI intervention demonstrates that using culturally relevant, multimedia campaigns—such as music videos—can challenge and shift social norms that constrain young women's agency in South Africa. By positioning young women as active agents in their own narratives and confronting norms around sexual silence, gender inequality, and stigma, the campaign promoted collective action and dialogue. Social norm transformation requires both structural critique and representation that affirms young women's voices.

Objectives

To explore how young women in South Africa interpret, engage with, and are potentially influenced by the ZAZI music video campaign, with a focus on its impact on gender norms and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) messaging.

Methods

The study recruited 104 young women aged 18–24 through community organizations in five South African provinces. A purposive sampling strategy ensured diversity in language, geography, and socioeconomic background. Researchers conducted 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 26 individual in-depth interviews in 2015. The qualitative design allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' interpretations of the ZAZI music video. Data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, with coding focused on gender norms, empowerment, agency, and collective action.

Intervention Details

ZAZI is a national HIV prevention and women's empowerment campaign in South Africa that includes a multimedia music video designed to convey positive messaging about self-empowerment, resilience, and resistance to gender inequality. Developed collaboratively with young women, the video aimed to promote critical reflection and foster alternative narratives to dominant, often disempowering, portrayals of young women.

Results

Participants generally responded positively to the ZAZI music video, highlighting its empowering imagery, relatable narratives, and its challenge to dominant gender norms. Many described feeling inspired by representations of strong women and the call for solidarity and collective action. However, some participants

NORMS ADDRESSED

- GENDER
- GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
- HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Open access: No

REGION

Sub-Saharan Africa

COUNTRY

South Africa

AGE GROUP

Older adolescent girls (15-17 years), Young adult women (18-24 years)

PUBLICATION YEAR

2021

RESEARCH MEASURES AND METHODS

Qualitative

Center on Gender Equity and Health at UC San Diego

NORMS EVIDENCE REVIEW



normsrepository.org

Two additional updates will be completed on the site in 2026, so we are accepting articles!
For more information, fill out this form or email geh@health.ucsd.edu

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Thank You!

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