GENDER NORMS IN SOUTH ASIA

SEPTEMBER 2021

Diva Dhar
GENDER NORMS IN SOUTH ASIA: AGENDA

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS
- Conceptualizing gender norms
- Gender norms and the data chain

STATE OF GENDER NORMS
- Gender norms from GSNI
- Findings from South Asia
- Gender norms and work

WHAT WORKS
- Shifting gender norms
- Promising programming

PROGRAM TO POLICY
- Influencing policy to shift gender norms
ROLE OF NORMS IN GENDER EQUITY
NORMS ARE EMBEDDED IN A SYSTEM OF STRUCTURAL DRIVERS THAT INTERSECT AND SUSTAIN BEHAVIOR(S)

Figure 1: Conceptual Model for Measuring Social Norms: Learn-Adhere-Enforce

Gender norms cross issues of economic participation, access, and security to drive women’s economic empowerment.
GENDER NORMS DATA AND EVIDENCE AGENDA

**Improve how to MEASURE**
- Testing and sharing validated gender norms and agency measures / modules with UCSD
- Expanding country-level capacity to measure and track gender norm-related data
- New measures and modules within World Values Survey and Afrobarometer

**Understand what MATTERS**
- Evaluating laws and policies towards women’s rights in Women, Business, and the Law, in intersection with norms
- ODI analysis and report on global state of gender norms

**Evaluate what WORKS**
- Implementation research, testing, experimental work designed to shift gender norms to support WEE (ie Plan-It Girls)
- Evaluating impact of gender norm change program on WEE (eg Reseaux des Femmes)
- Institutionalize WECs for women to overcome gender barriers (eg Nigeria for Women Project)

**Amplify and use EVIDENCE**
- Intensify at scale proven solutions
GENDER NORMS IN SOUTH ASIA: STYLIZED FACTS
FOCUS ON SOUTH ASIA

Findings from the World Values Survey illustrate that, with the exception of Arab States, South Asia has the highest percentage of the population biased against gender equality and women’s empowerment. Biases were measured across physical, economic, political, and educational dimensions to tell a holistic picture.

Multi-Dimensional Social Norms Bias Against GE / WE (% of population)

- Arab States: Male 0.656, Female 0.887
- Developed: Male 0.192, Female 0.271
- East Asia and the Pacific: Male 0.429, Female 0.56
- Europe and Central Asia: Male 0.555, Female 0.721
- Latin America and the Caribbean: Male 0.342, Female 0.237
- South Asia: Male 0.616, Female 0.76
- Sub-Saharan Africa: Male 0.573, Female 0.697

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THE WORLD VALUES SURVEY (2010-14 ROUND) INDICATES THAT RESPONDENTS IN SOUTH ASIA WERE MORE LIKELY THAN MOST OTHER REGIONS TO AGREE THAT MEN SHOULD HAVE A GREATER RIGHT TO JOBS.

Source: World Values Surveys (Wave 6)
THE WORLD VALUES SURVEY INDICATES THAT IN RECENT YEARS, THE PERCENT OF PEOPLE WHO AGREE THAT MEN SHOULD HAVE A GREATER RIGHT TO A JOB HAS INCREASED IN SOUTH ASIA.
INDIA HAS EXPERIENCED ONE OF THE GREATEST DROPS IN THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN AND MEN WITH NO GENDER BIASES IN THE LAST DECADE

Progress/change in the share of men/women with no gender social norms bias in the period between 2005–2009 and 2010–2014, according to UNDP’s Gender Social Norms Index

Source: UNDP

GSNI FINDINGS FROM INDIA SHOW WORSENING GENDER BIASES

Share of people with gender biases are increasing across India, going against global trends

**GSNI 1 (share of people with at least 1 bias)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005-2009</th>
<th>2010-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GSNI 1 - SA (India)</td>
<td>91.4</td>
<td>98.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>86.46</td>
<td>87.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GSNI 2 (share of people with at least 2 biases)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005-2009</th>
<th>2010-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GSNI 2 - SA (India)</td>
<td>75.91</td>
<td>83.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>65.55</td>
<td>65.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AN EXPERIMENT ON SHAADI.COM INDICATES THAT SIZEABLE PENALTY IN THE MARRIAGE MARKET FOR WOMEN WHO WANT TO WORK AFTER MARRIAGE (DHAR, 2021)
LITERATURE ON GENDER NORM CHANGE

- Anti-egalitarian gender attitudes are known to be associated with lower FLFP and gender pay gaps (Fortin, 2005)
- "Stickiness" and persistence of gender attitudes across generations, time and migration
  - Culture, history, agricultural technology, politico-economic regime influence gender norms and FLFP
  - Growing body of research that gender norms and attitudes are intergenerational
- Emerging evidence that normative change lags behind legal change, limiting the impact of legal change in isolation (Pande & Roy)
- Impact and acceptance of progressive laws may be limited without concurrent norm change (Pande & Roy, Marshall Lecture)

Figure 2. Support for Gender Equality in Access to jobs and Equality in labor laws

Notes: Data on support for gender equality in access to jobs comes from the world values survey 2010-2020. The y-axis variable is a country fixed effect from a regression similar to that in Table 3, but with a slightly fuller specification of marital status, education level, and employment status. We interpret this value as a cultural norm. Data on labor laws comes from the World Bank Women, Business and Laws Index.
WHAT WORKS
## HOW TO CHANGE GENDER NORMS

Norm change has effectively been driven by cross-sector interventions, including:

- Informational interventions to update beliefs (*Bursztyn et al*, 2020)
- Legal protections (*Hyland et al*, 2020)
- Education (*Bhalotra et al*, 2013)
- Community mobilization and women’s collectives (*Barooah et al*, 2019)
- Programs for sensitization and behavior change (*Dhar et al*, 2018)
- Removing financial barriers or providing financial incentives (*Campa and Serafinelli et al*, 2019)
CHANGING GENDER ATTITUDES: FOCUS ON ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

- Adolescents are young enough to have malleable attitudes (Kohlberg, 1976)
- Adolescents are old and mature enough to debate these issues around norms
- Attitudes shaped in adolescence can have long-term effects
- Schools can be a vehicle to change attitudes / counterbalance other influences and messaged children get at home and in the community
- Scalability by incorporating the material into standard programming curriculum (e.g., taught by schoolteachers, embedded in textbooks)
BRE AKTHROU PROGRAM

Aimed to reduce support for restrictive gender norms

- Implemented in secondary schools in Haryana, India with 7th to 10th graders
- Classroom discussions about gender equality over two and a half years
- Taught facts, communication skills, endorsed gender equality, and prompted students to reflect on their own and society’s views

Significantly shifted gender attitudes and behaviors

- Led to more gender-equitable attitudes and behaviors
- No effects on girls’ aspirations
- Effect on attitudes remained persistent two years after the program
- However, long-run effects were larger for boys

What did we learn?

- School-based discussions may be replicable model to shift gender norms
- Including boys and men is important
- Boys and men may have fewer constraints to change behaviors
- Girls may have lower agency to act on progressive gender attitudes
- Scale through government schools (Government of Punjab)

Plan-It Girls was an empowerment and employability program for adolescent girls in India. Using a gender transformative and ecological approach, the program was designed to shift gender norms, build skills, and establish a gender-equitable environment.

Program Design:
- Two-year program in Delhi and Jharkhand
- Reached 5,744 girls and 5,253 boys in secondary schools; trained 125 teachers; >2,000 mothers of adolescent girls; 18,000 people through community events

Key Findings:
1. Successfully shifted empowerment and employability indicators for adolescent girls in Delhi and Jharkhand
2. The model improved girls' self-perception (self-efficacy and self-esteem)
3. Gender attitudes improved among girls in urban site.
4. Engagement with various stakeholders (e.g. male peers, parents, teachers and community members) contributed to building a supportive environment
5. Facilitators with backgrounds similar to participants acted as role models.

https://www.icrw.org/research-programs/plan-it-girls/
MAIN KUCH BHI KAR SAKTI HOON (I, A WOMAN, CAN ACHIEVE ANYTHING)

Program Design & Findings:

- Entertainment-education (EE) intervention in north India
- 3-season TV show, social media campaign, and radio program
- Conversations on women’s rights, gender roles, and social determinants of health
- Interactive voice response systems (IVRS) for real-time engagement and conversation
- Creative narrative persuasion approaches can enable social and behavior change

Illustrative Impacts:

- When asked if a woman should be beaten if she goes out without telling her husband, only 25.4% of female views agreed (baseline: 47.8%)
- 77% of viewers felt that girls should complete their education and be 18 before getting married compared to 68% of non-viewers
- Women’s belief that they have an equal ability to hold leadership positions in local government also increased from 56.7% at baseline to 77.1% at endline
- Sample from areas across the two states of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar
- Findings from endline following completed first season
- Post-season 3 evaluation (13 villages in Uttar Pradesh) [Wang et al, 2020]
  - Increased perceived importance of providing regular SRH counselling services for young people
  - Men showed significantly higher ratings of using male condoms
  - Significantly higher ratings of women adopting oral contraceptive pills
  - Raised awareness of injectables, especially among women.

Drivers of success:

- Use of diverse media channels
- Reinforcing key messages

IMPACT ON POLICY
COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls and existing inequalities have widened (including in livelihoods, burden of care, schooling, and violence)

As governments design COVID-19 response, data on gender norms can influence most impactful policy response

Policies need to address intersectional topics

Emerging evidence on the impact of policies aimed directly at addressing social norms

J-PAL scaling up Breakthrough program in India

New BMGF work with IDRC and J-PAL on gender norms programming
THANK YOU
ANNEX
NORMS ARE EMBEDDED IN A SYSTEM OF STRUCTURAL DRIVERS THAT INTERSECT AND SUSTAIN THE BEHAVIOR(S)

Gender Social Norms Index: Uses data from World Values Survey to capture how social beliefs can obstruct gender equality along multiple dimensions (UNDP)
Box table 1 Biases in social norms show a gradient (percentage of people biased by indicator)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Politics</th>
<th>The economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>Enhanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not essential:</td>
<td>Women have the</td>
<td>Men make better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women have the</td>
<td>same rights as men</td>
<td>political leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men make better</td>
<td>than women do</td>
<td>than women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men should have</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men make better</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple average</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weighted average</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Based on 75 countries and territories with data from wave 5 (2005–2009) or wave 6 (2011–2014) of the World Values Survey, accounting for 81 percent of the global population.

**Source:** Mukhopadhyay, Rivera and Tapia (2019), based on data from the World Values Survey.
HOW DO WEE OUTCOMES MOVE WITH MORE EQUAL LAWS?

- Historic analyses of laws and policies over the past 50-year period across countries, and WEE outcomes utilizing the World Bank’s Women, Business and the Law Index and WB micro-data on women-level outcomes.
- WBL data describes law and policy changes for eight topics (Mobility, Workplace, Pay, Marriage, Parenthood, Entrepreneurship, Assets, and Pension) for 190 economies from 1971-2020

Preliminary findings (Hyland et al): An improvement in the WBL index, signaling more equal laws, are associated with a range of better outcomes for women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic inclusion and empowerment outcomes:</th>
<th>Magnitude: a reform of one WBL data point associated with:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerable employment</td>
<td>In Sri Lanka, 5,800 fewer women in vulnerable employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waged and salaried workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation in management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in parliament</td>
<td>In Thailand, an extra 1.6 female MPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in ministerial positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GENDER NORMS AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Legal, policy and institutional environment

Norms about relative value of investment in girls’ and boys’ education

Gendered norms about children’s economic activity

Norms about domestic care responsibilities

Norms about voice and decision-making in household and workplace

Educational opportunities

Skill development opportunities

Access to and control of assets

Norms about ownership and control of physical and financial assets

Outcomes: e.g. gender segregated work; gendered patterns of involvement in work with low/high returns

Norms about whether women should work and suitable work for men and women

Norms about desirability of child marriage

Norms about respectability (behavior in mixed gender environments, mobility)

Figure 5.1: Relationship between gendered social norms and women’s economic outcomes
SPOTLIGHT: GENDER NORMS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS, LANCET SERIES
INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF GENDER ATTITUDES

Students

Parents

Gender Index (weighted)

Percent

Female

Male
Women’s economic empowerment is tied to gender norms

Global economy was oriented around oppressive gender norms

Men were assigned to public sphere, and women were relegated to unpaid, private sphere

Gender norms long justified economic inequality and women’s limited access to workforce

Gender norms have begun to shift, though progress remains slow

South Asia is moving against global trends and away from equitable beliefs
Box 6: India – declining female labour force participation amid idealisation of women as home-makers

Some studies of the steep decline in women’s labour force participation in India (11 percentage points over the period 1996–2019) suggest that economic, political and cultural changes in recent years have led to a nationalist political discourse that places a higher value on female domesticity, motherhood and middle-class purity. In this context, in households that can afford it, the symbolic value in married women staying at home and managing children’s education and other wider family and community activities outweighs the economic returns from paid work (Lahoti and Swaminathan, 2018; Luke, 2018). Indeed, as households become more affluent, they create new norms of women engaging in these domestic activities, rather than paid work. This may explain the particularly steep decline in paid work among women aged 30–39 (Mehrotra and Sinha, 2017), who are the most likely to be engaged in child rearing.

World Values Survey data analysed for this report are consistent with this hypothesis. Over 25 years, the proportion of young people under 30 in India who consider being a housewife as fulfilling as working has declined by only 3.6 percentage points (from 64.6% to 61%). Similarly, the proportion of people who feared that young children would suffer if mothers work fell by only 10 percentage points, as compared with 13% in Nigeria and 20% in Brazil, the other middle-income countries in the sample.
# GENDER ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, AND NORMS

## Summary Description
Shifting gender attitudes and norms has been shown to be central across WEE efforts. For both adolescents and women, expanding agency through multi-layered interventions is a promising approach to sustainably impacting women’s lives.

## Current Grants
- Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women Initiative, Global, IDRC
- J-PAL Gender and Economic Agency Initiative on Measurement and Evidence, Global, MIT
- Initiative for What Works for WEE Hub, Kenya, University of Nairobi
- Flagship Programme Initiative Making Every Woman and Girl Count, Global, UN Women
- Landscaping of Women’s Economic Empowerment, Research, Data, and Evaluation, Global, Stanford University

### Measurement:
- Measuring Gender Equity and Empowerment for Monitoring and Evaluation: Identifying and Addressing Gaps in the Field, Global, UCSD
- India Human Development Survey: Inclusion of WEE Measures, India, University of Maryland

## Key Learnings
- Gendered social norms and hierarchies limit women’s opportunities and market access, and deep-rooted social norms exacerbate women’s disadvantage.
- Parental attitudes and behaviors, gender roles in current society or historically, politico-economic regimes are all factors which influence women’s labor force participation.
- Gender attitudes are transmitted to the next generation and shape their aspirations and outcomes
- Two promising evidence-based interventions based on RCTs which can be replicated in different contexts
  1) “Belief correction” - Correcting men’s misperceptions of gender norms (Saudi Arabia)
  2) Classroom-based gender trainings for adolescents (eg Breakthrough. Plan-It Girls)
- Layering programs on gender social beliefs and norms along with skilling programs can be successful in improving employment and other outcomes (eg BRAC ELA, Educate!) or along with savings groups (eg NFW)
- Other platforms which have been used more broadly for SRH, leadership or other norms may also offer a potential platform for WEE such as role models, quotas, edutainment and mass media programs
- There is some evidence that boys/men may be able to exercise more agency to translate gender attitudes into behavior, and engaging men is important
- The long-term impact of these programs and applicability of evidence to other contexts needs further research

## Accomplishments
1. IDRC’s brief on [WEE in East Africa](#)
2. Based on associated RCT, [Government of Punjab partners with Breakthrough and J-PAL South Asia to implement gender sensitization curriculum in all government schools](#)
3. University of Nairobi’s summary of the [gendered impacts of COVID on women and girls](#) and recommendations on incorporating gender norms in recovery
GIRLS’ GROUPS IMPROVE EMPOWERMENT AND ECONOMIC OUTCOMES

Girls’ groups improve employment, self-efficacy, gender attitudes, and SRH / HIV knowledge.\(^1\) Programs also led to school enrollment increases.\(^2\)

- Effects tend to be limited to “domains in which adolescent girls are able to exert influence”\(^2\) and “independent of external factors”\(^3\)
- “Suboptimal performance” on those that rely on the external ecosystem (such as health behavior and health status)\(^3\)

**How do we define “Girls’ Groups”?**

- Intentionally-created girls-only groups or clubs, whether in-school or community-based
- “Safe spaces” to meet, learn, socialize

Used to:

- Deliver content and build girls’ social, health, cognitive and economic assets
- Foster solidarity, leadership skills, empowerment, and social support
- Expand girls’ connections with peers and mentors

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# GENDER ATTITUDES, BELIEFS, AND NORMS

## Exemplars/interventions: Household conversations with men and women to address household inequities, engage men and boys in household programming, working with savings groups to increase financial inclusion and promote women’s control of resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Project Summary</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Donor &amp; Partners</th>
<th>Platform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating the impact of holistic participatory programs on reducing and redistributing unpaid care work in Rwanda</td>
<td>Inform the scaling up of a promising model to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work between women and men, in order to improve women's economic outlook</td>
<td>Réseaux des Femmes' unpaid care work project is aimed at ensuring that women have equal access to and control over resources and opportunities, including control over their time-use and their income, through a holistic and participatory approach. Includes empowering and sensitizing women to the unpaid care work burden in their homes, implementing time use charts to track the time that women and men spend on different activities within households, providing improved access to resources to decrease time spent on domestic work, and engaging and sensitizing men on the burden of unpaid care work</td>
<td>IDRC, IPAR</td>
<td>Private-sector led platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Impact of a School-Based Gender Attitude Change Program in India</td>
<td>Evaluates a school-based intervention in India that engaged adolescents in classroom discussions about gender equality for two and a half years with the goal of eroding their support for restrictive gender norms</td>
<td>Breakthrough, a gender human rights organization that had developed other social change campaigns, designed an intervention aimed at influencing adolescent boys’ and girls’ views related to gender norms, and implemented it in government schools, with the government’s permission</td>
<td>J-PAL, Breakthrough, Government of Haryana</td>
<td>School-based platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting gender norms and public perceptions about unpaid care work in workplaces and families via CARE’s POWER Model in Uganda</td>
<td>Shed light on what works and what is scalable in shifting gender norms, public perceptions, and attitudes related to unpaid care work</td>
<td>CARE’s POWER Model, which is an integrated, rights-based approach to transforming unequal power relations between men and women, was originally designed to address to GBV.</td>
<td>IDRC, CARE International, EPRC</td>
<td>Government-led platform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTV Shuga: Changing social norms and behaviors with entertainment education in Nigeria</td>
<td>Conduct an impact evaluation on the MTV Shuga campaign, a behavioral communication intervention</td>
<td>MTV Shuga is an ‘edutainment’ (educational entertainment) television drama featuring educational storylines about HIV/AIDS on viewers’ sexual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors</td>
<td>J-PAL, World Bank, MTV Staying Alive Foundation</td>
<td>Mass media platform</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MenCare educate men about equitable, nonviolent fatherhood and caregiving practices.

Group education with fathers and couples challenges inequitable norms, and creates long-term changes in the lives of men, women, and children.

Rwanda example (Doyle et al, 2018):
- Designed to transform gender norms around masculinity through positive models of fatherhood
- Up to 15 sessions with men, 8 with partners designed to question and reflect on gender norms
- Led to substantial and sustained improvements across multiple outcomes: rates of IPV, reduction in male dominance in household decision making, improved household division of labor
- What did we learn?:
  - Emphasizing joint decision-making through skills-based and communication exercises shifted unequal gender norms
  - Despite greater male involvement in household duties, women’s time spent on household duties did not decrease
IDRC GROW 2: GROWTH AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN IN EAST AFRICA*

To support high quality in-country evidence and data on unpaid care work and labor market segregation for policies and programs in East Africa

Key Activities:
- Scoping and country policy mapping to inform research priorities and entry points
- Call for proposals, evidence syntheses, systematic reviews and accompaniment studies
- Regional workshops and policy dialogues/fora in East Africa

Childcare and unpaid care work
- Learning series + evidence synthesis on COVID — prompted new findings on supply of childcare
- New project examples:
  - Testing a franchising model for childcare centres in Kenya
  - Testing Reseaux des femmes program on UCW norms for scale-up in Uganda
  - Evaluating cash grants vs childcare for women’s entrepreneurship in Uganda

*With IDRC and Hewlett

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LABOR MARKET INEQUITIES

- There has been little global progress on the scale of women’s participation in the labor force over the past 25 years.
- Rising education levels, shifts in economic structures that create more job opportunities, and gender-egalitarian changes in laws and policies can interact to lead to shifts in gender norms.
- Gender norms (e.g. care responsibilities, the importance of maintaining respectability and chastity, and norms that tolerate gender-based violence) have blocked economic progress despite gains in opportunity.
- Norms around care work remain particularly strong.
- Burden of expectation of childcare continues to act as barrier to economic empowerment.
- Despite mixed progress, economic gender norms are moving towards equality. *South Asia is an exception.*
Programs that give women access to resources are more likely to be successful in improving women’s agency if they use design features that give women more control over those resources.

Addressing multiple gender constraints has shown effective in improving women’s agency.

Some approaches that improve women’s agency and shift gender norms:

- adolescent girls’ programs that enhance girls’ soft and life skills;
- laws that mandate gender equality by protecting women’s property rights, removing labor restrictions, or guaranteeing women’s representation in politics;
- cash and in-kind transfer programs that enhance women’s agency in marriage and childbearing decisions or protect women against violence; and
- the intensive, multifaceted “Graduation” approach originally developed by the nongovernmental organization (NGO) BRAC.

Women’s collectives have shown themselves to be effective at improving incomes and empowering women.
Interventions towards equality are limited in impact if they ignore gender norms.

Understanding state of gender norms core to making progress towards equality.

Even strong efforts to tackle the material manifestations of poverty and inequality may not bring the hoped-for returns if these efforts do not also focus on gender norms. Understanding where gender norms impedes progress illuminates where deeper engagement with more intractable issues may be needed.