Shifting social norms to tackle violence against women and girls

LONDON
SCHOOL of
HYGIENE
&TROPICAL
MEDICINE

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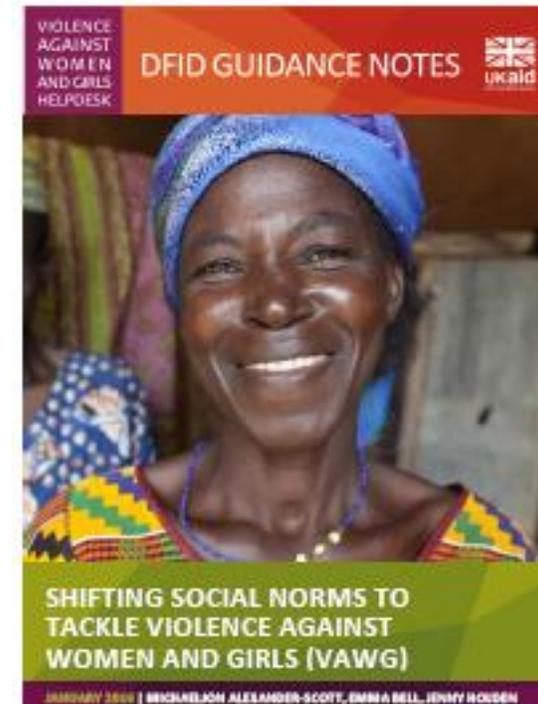
VIOLENCE
AGAINST
WOMEN
AND GIRLS
HELPDESK

UKaid
from the British people

Context

- Expanding interest in social norms among donors and practitioners

- Recent release of several key resources:

  - DFID Reading pack

  - DFID Guidance Note

Special Thanks to MichaelJon Alexander-Scott for sharing his slides

Overview

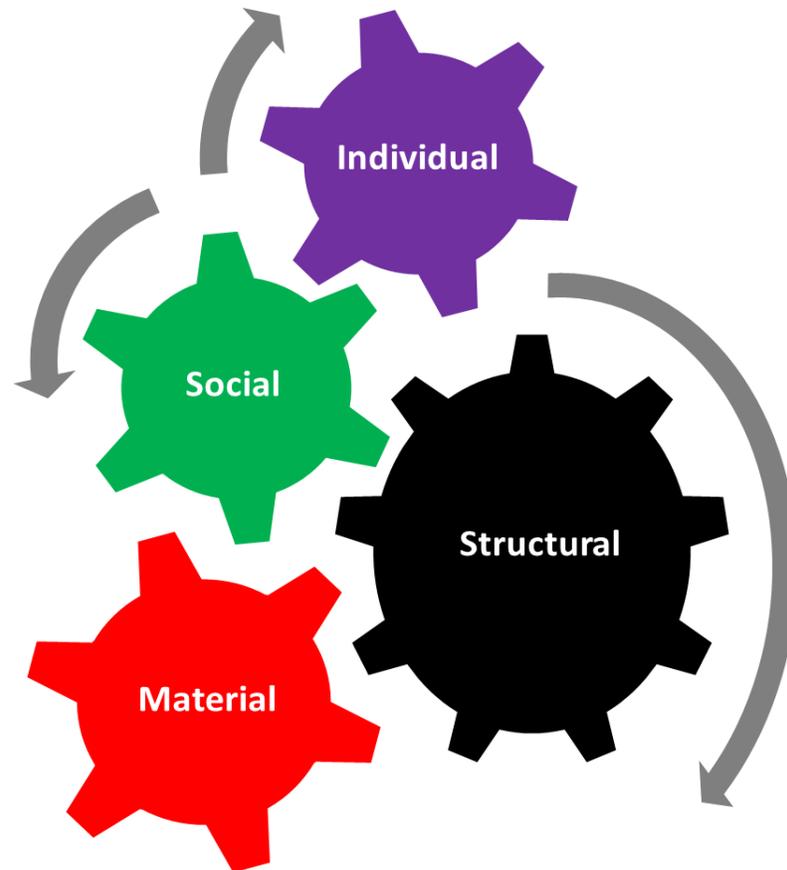▶ Why address social norms?

▶ How to diagnose and measure social norms

▶ Tackling social norms

WhatWorks
TO PREVENT VIOLENCE

A combination of factors sustain VAWG

**A missing cog,
not a magic bullet**

Individual factors: attitudes, agency, factual beliefs

Social factors: norms and networks

Material realities: access to resources

Structural forces: conflict, laws, ideologies

Source: Heise and Manji (2015); Heise (2015)

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So what are social norms?

- A rule of behaviour that people in a group conform to because they believe:

    - Most other people in the group conform to it (i.e. it is typical behaviour)

    AND

    - Most other people in the group believe they ought to conform to it (i.e. it is appropriate behaviour)

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3 important features

▶ Beliefs about others

▶ They exist within reference groups

▶ Maintained by approval and disapproval

Social norms drive violence in two ways

Some harmful or violent behaviours are held in place by social norms: shared beliefs that the **violent behaviour** is **typical** and **appropriate.**

Other violent behaviours – such as IPV – may not be held in place by beliefs that the specific behaviour is typical and appropriate.

BUT they are **underpinned** by other beliefs and other social norms around **gender roles, family privacy, male authority** that create expectations that perpetuate men's use of violence

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Getting clear on constructs

Table 1: Distinctions between social norms and other forms of beliefs

Beliefs about others	**Personal beliefs**
What is typical in my reference group What is appropriate in my reference group **Social norm**	What I favour/disfavour - **Attitude** What I believe to be morally right/wrong - **Moral Beliefs** What I believe to be true/false - **Factual beliefs**

Source: Adapted from Bicchieri et al (2014) and Heise and Manji (2015)

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Partner violence is sustained by:

▶ **Factual beliefs:** women will not obey unless beaten; women need discipline to be good wives

▶ **Positive attitudes** toward the practice -- hitting is an acceptable form of discipline

▶ **Normative expectations:** other men will look down upon a man who cannot keep his wife in line (masculinity norms)

▶ **Other norms:** family privacy -- disclosing violence will bring shame upon the family

▶ **Gender roles/scripts:** ideals of what a "good wife" is/does

Social Influence

Approval – Positive benefit or identity

Disapproval – Negative Sanction

(including anticipation of such sanctions)

Socialization

Internalization of gender roles and expectations

Gender becomes "naturalized," invisible (e.g. *doxa*)

Illustration from 1970 children's book entitled: *I'm Glad I'm a Boy; I'm Glad I'm a Girl*

Creative dynamic between empowerment & norms-based strategies

▶ Empowerment focuses on building agency:

  ▶ Expanding horizons/aspirations

  ▶ Building skills and self-efficacy

  ▶ Encouraging critical reflection

▶ Norms, however, can serve as a "brake" on social change

▶ Agency helps women and girls resist social expectations, but doesn't transform expectations

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► Why address social norms?

► **How to diagnose and measure social norms**

► Tackling social norms

Diagnosis: key questions

▶ Whose opinion matters (regarding the behaviour in question)?

▶ Is the behaviour perceived as typical among the reference group?

▶ Is the behaviour perceived as appropriate?

▶ Are their consequences for non-compliance? i.e. social sanctions

Qualitative research is probably the easiest way to develop a hypothesis

'people would think badly about them'

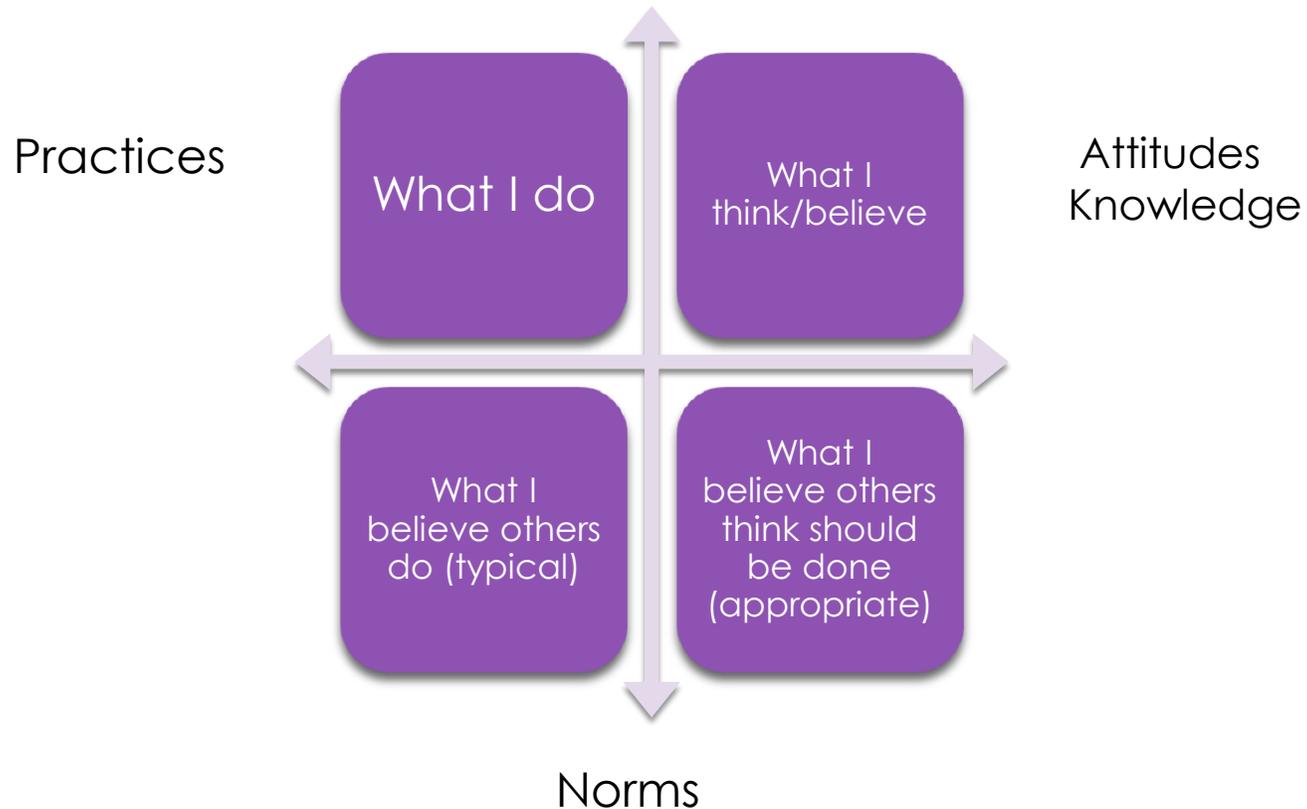*'This would bring shame on the family'*

'Everyone agrees'

E.g. the wife of a man in your community disobeys him and he beats her – what would other men think of this man?

What would they think of him if he did not beat her?

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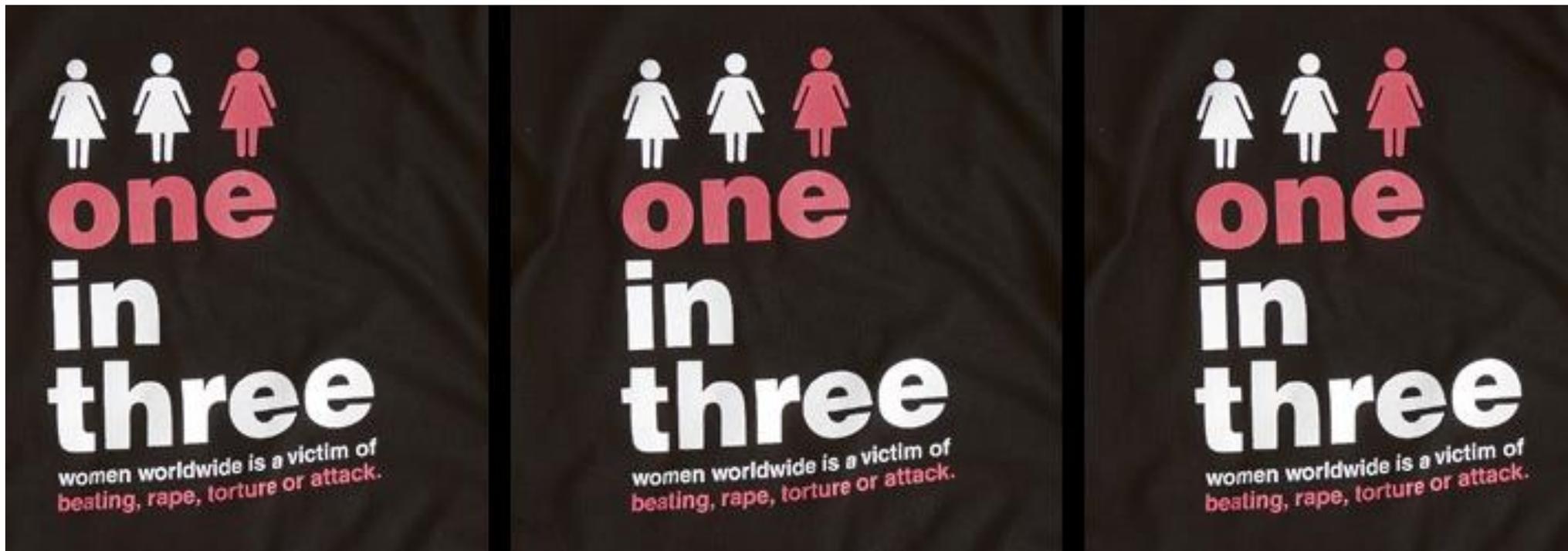# BUT quantitative allows you track change over time

Practices

Attitudes Knowledge

What I do	What I think/believe
What I believe others do (typical)	What I believe others think should be done (appropriate)

Norms

WhatWorks
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▶ Why address social norms?

▶ How to diagnose and measure social norms

▶ **Tackling social norms**

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GOAL:

*Creating new **social** expectations*

Awareness campaigns can backfire

Emphasize positive descriptive norms

Promote public debate and deliberation

Changing individual attitudes is insufficient.

Individuals need to see and hear from others in the reference group who may be changing their attitudes towards VAWG, *so that expectations also change*.

Publicise role models and benefits of new behaviour

Role models may persuade people to adopt new norms, condemn existing norms and/or simply make an alternative seem feasible where previously it was unimaginable.

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Develop a diffusion strategy to catalyse broader societal change.

How can change be scaled up beyond the direct beneficiaries and participants to the wider society?