Theory into Practice: Measuring Social Norms for Gender Transformative Programming

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Passages Technical Consultation on Social Norms
February 29, 2016

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Why Social Norms Approach

- How does positive social change happen?

- What is *really* influencing people's behavior? What should we measure?

- Is there a catalytic push point that could trigger larger scale change across communities?

Our Journey

- Initial training workshop on social norms theory and measurement by C. Bicchieri's team at UPenn

- 2 years iterative learning process to bring together theory and translate into our work in a practical way

- Focused in on 2 main learning sites:
  - Sri Lanka – IPV prevention using male engagement and media campaign
  - Ethiopia – adolescent empowerment and early marriage prevention

- Applying a gender transformative perspective

Measurement

- From diagnosing social norms, to understanding change

- Process:
  - Identify norms and reference groups
  - Quantitative surveys to diagnose norms + FGDs to understand their dynamics and impact on behavior

- Tools: Surveys & FGDs (including vignettes)

Vignettes

- Vignettes tell short stories about imaginary characters in specific scenarios

- Vignettes unpack the social norms "snapshot": what's going on, and their impact on behaviors
  - How strong or weak are the norms? Where are the "cracks"/ signs of bending or relaxing? How can we tell?

  - Developed participatory exercises to help staff to tap into their own intuition and experiences of social change, to bridge practical and theoretical and drive forward the sense-making process in new ways

Lessons

- Social norms approach has been useful and is helping us to make sense of how social forces, especially peer pressure, influence behavior – but need to think through measurement and analysis demands on staff capacity

- Importance of training research staff/facilitators in basics of social norms theory, especially for FDGs, so they know how to probe and what information is needed

- Need for a clear analysis framework for the vignette data centered around identifying and understanding the key signs/symptoms for social norms change

- Vignette scenarios need to be carefully tailored to each community and sub-group in order to resonate and elicit useful data

Reflection

- If we can build an evidence base for social expectations and behavior change, could social expectations become a 'good enough' proxy indicator, e.g., of difficult to measure issues like GBV prevention?