



The social norms factor

How gendered social norms influence how we empower women in market systems development

Report

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1. Introduction

“Development policy is due for its own redesign based on careful consideration of human factors... people are malleable and emotional actors whose decision making is influenced by contextual cues, local social networks and social norms, and shared mental models.”

Mind, Society and Behaviour: World Development Report, 2015

Development programmes taking a market systems approach increasingly recognise the important role that social issues play in shaping economic development outcomes. The idea that social factors influence behaviour is not new. Branches of learning such as sociology, women and gender studies, and cultural anthropology have understood and studied the functions of networks, collective decision making and social norms in shaping behaviours for many decades. Yet, traditional economic development approaches are notorious for ignoring these “human factors” in their programming.¹ Currently, we see a paradigm shift in the economics field, as well as in approaches to market systems development. Private sector development policy makers and practitioners are incorporating more and more social analysis and tools into their work such as gender analysis, social network analysis and power analysis. In particular, one social construct – gender – has recently received more attention. Local communities and practitioners are now aiming explicitly to empower women, as well as finding ways to mainstream gender dynamics into private sector development. Simultaneously, donors have been paying closer attention to women’s economic empowerment, as demonstrated by the new women’s economic empowerment policies and strategies being released by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), Global Affairs Canada, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and various others.

Despite the recognition of the importance of social dynamics, most market systems and women’s economic empowerment programmes continue to have a limited understanding of how social factors influence human behaviour. Current approaches attempt to distil the messiness of human actions by focusing on market behaviours and incentives, often assuming people make rational decisions given the right resources and information. As such, most programming tends to primarily focus on increasing women’s access to opportunities, whether it be to markets, education, information, land, rights, etc. – with less consideration of how the socio-cultural context in which they operate influences their decisions and ability to engage with, and benefit from, those opportunities. Many market systems programmes do take agency issues into consideration – e.g., voice, choice and decision-making authority. However, even the programmes that seek explicitly to advance women’s agency do not delve deeper into complex social norms and belief systems that impact women’s ability to participate fully in market systems.

To address this gap, this paper explores how social norms influence women’s economic empowerment in market systems development, and what practical lessons might be learned. The report briefly documents how gendered social norms are currently understood in academic research, then attempts to present the current state of practice for market systems programmes via two in-depth cases, and seven mini-cases. The authors would like to point out that the evidence around defining, applying, measuring and documenting good practices in programming for gendered social norms in market systems is in its very early stages. Moreover, the practices, lessons and tools documented in this report have not been tested across different contexts, which would greatly impact implementation and results. Therefore, this report hopes to add to this initial evidence base by documenting current practices, putting forth promising programmatic strategies and future recommendations that we hope can be further explored, tested, and piloted to eventually document impact and good practice.

¹ World Bank. World Development Report: Mind, Society and Behaviour. 2015. <http://bit.ly/2b5P9IG>

2. Research objectives and background

The research centres on the following key questions:

- What are social norms and how are they defined?
- How do social norms influence women's engagement in market systems?
- How do market systems programmes identify and assess social norms that affect empowerment?
- What promising strategies can be applied to address gendered social norms to catalyse economic empowerment for women?

Links to LEO's Women's Economic Empowerment Research Agenda

This research complements recent studies conducted as part of a research initiative under the Leveraging Economic Opportunities (LEO) Women's Economic Empowerment learning agenda. The LEO learning agenda seeks to identify and fill gaps around the current understanding of women's economic empowerment (WEE) in market systems, and published a framework in 2014 entitled **Women's Economic Empowerment: Pushing the Frontiers of Market Systems Development**.² LEO has also recently published several studies on closely related topics, including **Making the Business Case: Women's Economic Empowerment in Market Systems Development** and the **Intervention Guide for the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index**.³ As with each of the LEO studies, this research delves deeper into an area of particular concern for market systems practitioners looking to promote WEE.

Key Definitions

The key definitions for this research largely draw from the LEO framework. These are working definitions, in that they may evolve in line with further research findings.

Women's economic empowerment refers to a process that enables women to access greater opportunities for advancing economically, and to have increased power to make and act on economic decisions that impact themselves and their families (often referred to as "agency").⁴ It is this combined influence of access and agency that sustain women's empowerment over time. While the empowerment process often comes from within individuals themselves, cultures, societies, and institutions create conditions that facilitate or undermine the possibilities for empowerment.⁵

2 Markel, Erin and Lindsey Jones. Pushing the Frontiers of Inclusive Market Systems Development. USAID. 2014. <https://beamexchange.org/resources/205/>

3 Markel, Erin and Lindsey Jones. Pushing the Frontiers of Inclusive Market Systems Development. USAID. 2014. <https://beamexchange.org/resources/205/>; Markel, Erin; Hess Rachel; Loftin Helen. Making the Business Case: Women's Economic Empowerment in Market Systems Development. USAID. 2015 <http://bit.ly/2aFAXMo> Stern, Michelle, Jones-Renaud, Lindsey, Hilleland Marya. Intervention Guide for the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEIA). USAID. 2016 <http://bit.ly/2b5Re1e>

4 Markel, Erin and Lindsey Jones. Pushing the Frontiers of Inclusive Market Systems Development. USAID. 2014. <https://beamexchange.org/resources/205/>; and "Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment." ICRW. 2011. <http://bit.ly/2b7Rrll>

5 Golla, Anne Marie, Anju Maholtra, Priya Nanda and Rekha Mehra. Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment: Definition, Framework and Indicators. International Center for the Research on Women (ICRW). 2011. <http://bit.ly/1S9oai>

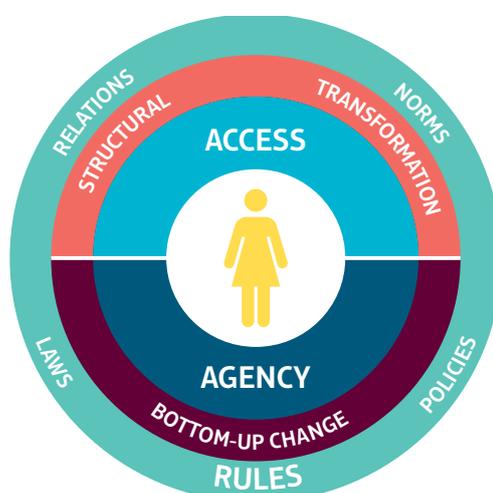
Box 1: Elements of Economic Empowerment

Agency: The ability to make decisions and act on economic opportunities, and influence one's own surroundings.⁶

Access: Availability of services, opportunities, and resources⁷ that allow one to upgrade her economic position.

The graphic below provides a visual representation of the core elements of empowerment (defined in further detail below), and how they relate to the systemic change processes promoted by market systems development. Research under LEO suggests that integrating interventions that support both bottom up change, and structural transformation have a greater likelihood of affecting systems change within the 'rules' that dictate women's terms of engagement.⁸

Figure 1: LEO WEE Framework⁹



Social Norms. While interpretations vary between disciplines, almost all descriptions share a consensus that social norms refer to the rules and accompanying behaviours that govern social behaviour and expectations. A more involved discussion of definitions is included in Section 3, with the most salient characteristics for the purposes of this study highlighted. It is useful to also situate the term in reference to the language commonly used by market systems and economic development practitioners. Both formal and informal rules govern market behaviours. The 'informal rules' include norms (or what we call "social norms" for the purpose of this research) and relations (meaning the power dynamics between people).

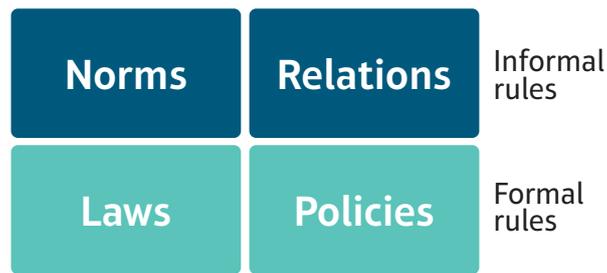
6 Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity. World Bank Group. 2014.

7 Adapted from the Springfield Institute's definition of access found in the 2015 Markets for the Poor Operational Guide.

8 Markel, Erin and Lindsey Jones. Pushing the Frontiers of Inclusive Market Systems Development. USAID. 2014. <http://bit.ly/2bkJBBC>

9 Ibid.

Figure 2: LEO WEE Graphic on Rules¹⁰



Gendered Social Norms Social. These norms are social norms that are ‘gendered,’ meaning that different norms apply to men and women, and that they impact men and women in different ways, particularly in regards to their engagement in economic activity. Gendered social norms are therefore a subset of the broader category of social norms. They permeate all aspects of community and individual life, and are manifested in differences in women’s and men’s roles and expectations for responsibilities in households, markets and public life. For the sake of simplicity, we refer from this point forward in the report to social norms, recognising that the norms pertinent to understand and discuss in the context of WEE are necessarily “gendered”.

¹⁰ Markel, Erin and Lindsey Jones. Presentation on LEO Framework. 2015.

3. Research methods and case study descriptions

In order to investigate the questions outlined above, the researchers undertook secondary and primary research. The secondary research drew concepts and lessons from relevant literature, reports and programme documents to understand how social norms impact women's engagement in markets. This helped the team to better define social norms and understand how they can affect women's and men's decisions about if and how to engage in economic activity. The primary research subsequently focused on two in-depth case studies and seven mini-cases from existing market systems programmes that focus on women's economic empowerment. The team used qualitative research methods, primarily through key informant interviews and focus group discussions, to further explore the questions outlined above.

The two in-depth cases included the Strengthening Dairy Value Chains (SDVC) programme in Bangladesh implemented by CARE International, and the Sierra Leone for Business Action (SOBA) programme implemented by Adam Smith International. An expert researcher travelled to each site to work with the project staff on collecting data. Interviews consisted of discussions with project staff (intervention or market managers, gender advisors, team leaders) to understand the approach, design and implementation, interviews or focus group discussions with women and men project beneficiaries, and interviews with formal and informal employers and other pertinent market actors.

The full report along with the research tools is available in a separate report on each case study. For the mini-cases, the researchers interviewed programme and/or gender leads for the following seven programs: Alliances Lesser Caucuses Programme in Georgia, ÉLAN – Democratic Republic of Congo, Financial Sector Deepening in Zambia, Katalyst – Bangladesh, Making Markets Work for the Chars – Bangladesh, Market Development Facility in Timor-Leste, and Promoting Inclusive Markets – Somalia. These mini-cases are integrated into the main body of this report.

In-depth Case summaries:

Case 1: CARE Bangladesh – Strengthening Dairy Value Chains (SDVC)

Building on the learnings and momentum of SDVC I, the second phase – SDVC II – is a four-year project that runs until December 2016. SDVC II works in seven districts with more than 30,000 small dairy farmers, and replicates the Tipping Point and Dairy Hub strategies in collaboration with BRAC Dairy. Together, CARE and BRAC are establishing dairy fat testing milk collection points to reach poor families and support them to increase average daily milk production and household income from milk sales. Work in SDVC I and experience with gender-targeted interventions provided CARE with greater awareness and capacity around gender issues, allowing them to be more intentional about women's participation and empowerment from the start of programming. With regard to women's empowerment, SDVC II strives to promote the following in its work:

- Women's access to and control over resources
- Women's decision-making authority
- Diversifying women's roles in the value chain beyond production to service provision
- Gender awareness to support women's participation and engagement in groups
- Time allocation (that is – workload) assessment by women and their partners

In order to achieve women's empowerment, CARE considered the effects of gendered social norms on realising its goals.

CASE 2: Sierra Leone for Business Action (SOBA)

The Sierra Leone for Business Action (SOBA) programme began in September 2013, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and broadly adheres to a market systems development approach. This seeks to improve the underlying pro-poor performance of a range of market systems in agriculture, light-manufacturing and sustainable energy sectors that increase opportunities for better access and improved growth for men and women living in poverty. Gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) is a cross-cutting programme imperative. Under the GBP £5.6 million SOBA2 contract with DFID, SOBA will continue until January 2018.

SOBA is not a gender or WEE-focused programme but rather aims to increase the net income of 106,425 poor women and men by 10 percent across the life of the programme. To date, SOBA's activities in the ag-inputs and services market are most developed. The ag-inputs and services market primarily targets vegetable crops, which have the potential for high profitability but are still in nascent stages in Sierra Leone. Women comprise about 70 percent of the labour force, making it an ideal sub-sector for SOBA to improve economic opportunities for women, in particular. Under SOBA's initial phase 18,000 poor women and men vegetable traders saw an increase in net income by 10 percent or more, through interventions such as quality local agricultural inputs and better distribution channels outside of towns.

Research Limitations

Given the scope and methods employed for this research, the study faces several limitations. First, it focuses primarily on how social norms affect the agency and access of women in developing countries, but analysis of how these norms have a corresponding affect on men, households, communities and other members of society remains secondary. Also, due to the cases available for study on this topic, many of the examples focus on women as entrepreneurs and/or farmers, and less on women as employees.

This study mainly addresses social norms that constrain women's economic empowerment, but acknowledges that they can also present opportunities. Indeed, in the context of market systems in developing countries, social norms are often prescribed a negative connotation and viewed as constraints to women's economic empowerment. However, while many social norms – both empirically and anecdotally – do limit women's participation in markets – others may provide neutral or positive opportunities for women. This is an area worth exploring in further detail, but proved beyond the scope of this research.

Additionally, the research methods made it difficult to capture lessons on “what not to do”, both because of the case selection process focusing on good practice cases and due to the natural tendency of interviewees to shed light on aspects of programming proving to be successful, rather than on those that have been less effective or led to unintended consequences.

Finally, certain themes around gender identity, which pose interesting and important questions for further research, were beyond the scope of the current study. This report recognises that gender identity is context specific and socially constructed and cannot be explained by the standard biological classification of “male” and “female”. For example, *kotis* and *hijras* in the Indian subcontinent and *katoeys* in Thailand, and *bacha posh* in Afghanistan and Pakistan, among others, do not fit into the simplistic two-gender framework of male and female. This study focuses on social norms that affect women's engagement in markets. It does not focus on norms that affect and influence gender identity.

4. Research findings

The findings below are structured as comprehensive answers to the four key questions outlined above. More specifically, we start with an investigation into why social norms matter to economic development generally, and more specifically for market systems approaches to economically empower women. This first section includes a discussion of how social norms are defined in the literature, and common characteristics salient to the purposes of this study. Secondly, we explore how social norms influence women’s engagement in market systems and present which social norms emerge as most significant within the case studies. Next, we discuss findings for how market development practitioners currently identify and assess social norms, and finally present strategies for working through them to catalyse systemic empowerment. We conclude with key recommendations and perspectives on future research.

4.1. What are social norms and how are they defined?

The concept of social norms is both complex and multi-dimensional, given its importance and long history of analysis in both psychological and sociological theory. While interpretations vary between the disciplines, the majority of descriptions share a consensus that social norms encompass ‘rules’ that govern social behaviour and expectations. Some definitions also include the accompanying social behaviour. The table below presents a select set of definitions used by academics and practitioners. The idea is not to present a comprehensive list of definitions of social norms, but instead for readers to have an overview of salient definitions to better understand the key elements.

Table 1: Definitions of social norms

Author / publication	Definition
Bicchieri, Cristina et al (2014)	A collective practice such that people conform to it as they believe that (1) most people in their relevant network follow to it [empirical expectations] and that (2) most people in their relevant network believe they ought to conform to it [normative expectations], both which comprise social expectations
Kandori, Michichiro (1992)	The specification of desirable behaviour together with sanction rules in a community
Marcus, Rachel and Caroline Harper (2014). Overseas Development Institute	A pattern of behaviour motivated by a desire to conform to the shared social expectations of an important reference group (sourced from L. Heise’s “Social Norms. Introduction” Presentation from 2013)
Auerbach, Judith et al (date unknown). ICRW and Clark University	Rules about behaviour that reflect and embody prevailing cultural values and are backed by social sanctions (informal and formal).
UNFPA (2014)	No explicit definition provided. However, an extraction of the reading defines them as follows: “Behavioural guides” that “reflect deeper social structures.” In addition, “all individuals live within a set of norms, and in turn reinforce the underlying social structures that make those norms seem timeless and natural (or essential). This is particularly true since norms are reflected, reinforced and celebrated in media, religious practices, sports, schools, workplaces and families”
National Social Norms Institute at the University of Virginia	Explicit or implicit rules that guide behaviours that occur in a social context. Social norms are transmitted through formal channels such as organisational policies, or by informal channels such as stories, rituals, role-modelling, or non-verbal communication. Norms vary by social group, and individuals may alter their behaviour to conform with different groups.

Unifying elements in the literature

An analysis of the literature reveals four main characteristics common to definitions of social norms, each of which has important implications for market systems practitioners, and which were also present in the case studies.

- **Social norms are learned early in life, but can be dynamic and change over time.** Socialisation into norms begins in childhood and continues through adolescence and adulthood where individuals continuously reproduce them through self-regulation as well as their awareness or perception of judgement by others. Political and economic shocks (for example, leading to high male unemployment), or other external influences (such as exposure to media or new role models) can shift individual points of reference for what is an acceptable or unacceptable activity for women to engage in.
- **People are not always aware their behaviour is governed by a social norm.** Deeply entrenched norms are described as “sticky” or “strong” as they are considered the most difficult to transform. They often exist beyond questioning and people do not necessarily have an awareness of their existence. This type of norm (for example, one that governs women’s household responsibilities, as highlighted in Box 2 below) are often described as cultural or natural, and are highly unlikely to change through direct external intervention. These ‘sticky’ norms are important to identify as they could represent binding constraints when seeking to empower women.

BOX 2: SOBA – “Sticky” Social Norms

One woman farmer said...*“that if a man wants to cook, the belief is that the woman wants to control and dominate the husband and her in-laws and community would be disapproving.”*

The wife would not allow this because of the local traditions and cultural perceptions. *“We are not used to other ways, this is how it is here..... And if the tradition was broken, our children would not be “blessed children” following the true path according to our religious beliefs.”*

- **Social norms are accompanied by surveillance and sanctioning practices to ensure compliance.** Transgressions can be met with internal sanctions on the self, such as guilt or remorse. The threat of external social sanctions (whether actually carried out or not), such as community pressure, gossip, ostracism, or violence, serve to promote individual compliance. Furthermore, not only are deviators from the norm susceptible to punishment, but a person who fails to punish them may also face negative repercussions. Thus, one can conclude that social norms are likely to be most “sticky” when individuals have the most to gain from compliance as well as the most to lose from deviance¹¹. Cultures and sub-groups of people differ on the extent of sanctions placed on individuals that violate normative behaviour. These sanctions can be key reasons why women do not engage in certain market practices and behaviours even when it seems like it is in their best interest from an economic perspective.
- **Social norms and their sanctioning are linked to inequality.** Norms play an important role in social stratification and perpetuating inequality – whether in access to power, resources, opportunities, or outcomes. For example, norms that restrict women’s right to land ownership result in limiting her access to productive resources and livelihood potential. Furthermore, the surveillance and sanctioning of social norms are thus a repeated exercise

¹¹ Marcus, Rachel and Caroline Harper. Gender justice and social norms: processes of change for adolescent girls. Overseas Development Institute. 2014.

of power relations. As such, social norms encompass “an expected agreement, or belief that the agreement exists, on the content of the norm and an enforcement of such agreement or belief by whoever holds power.”¹²

- **Social norms are different than personal beliefs, attitudes and interests.** Individual’s personal beliefs can be different than what is considered ‘the norm’. Personal beliefs are defined by individual’s attitudes around certain issues, but are not a set of collective behaviours and expectations like norms. Thus, norms are not simply guides or prescriptions on behaviour, but a complex interplay between individuals’ preferences, the options they can choose from, and the beliefs they maintain about their options.¹³ These complex relationships between individuals and norms can make the root cause of a social norm challenging to unpack. This reveals the importance of understanding the difference between normative and emergent or collective behaviours, and individual beliefs or preferences.

A quick analysis reveals varying levels of complexity and specificity in defining social norms. Sometimes the term explicitly refers to collectively practiced rules, sometimes to the individual behaviour associated with the rules, and sometimes both. Ambiguity also exists in the literature on the degree to which individual preference and agency factors into social norms. While there is consensus that certain types of social norms are entrenched to the point of being “sticky,” some definitions imply that norms are either simple guides or prescriptions on behaviour in which personal beliefs, attitudes and interests have no role. Bicchieri et al (2014), on the other hand, suggest that individuals prefer to conform to a norm not only because they are expected to, but also due to the belief that other people also conform to the norm.

This study’s definition of social norms

For the purposes of the research, it was important to go beyond a definitional analysis of social norms and settle on one that the team felt was most useful and appropriate. Aspects of Bicchieri et al.’s precise definition best positioned the team to identify and assess social norms during the data collection process – particularly because other definitions were so broad that it would run the risk of falsely assuming that all pervasive social behaviours were reflective of social norms.

Building on Bicchieri’s definition, this report sees the distinction and relationship between individual behavioural preferences and collective behavioural “rules” and expectations to be critical for how we understand social norms. Therefore, from a practitioner perspective and for the purposes of this report, this paper is defining social norms affecting women’s market engagement as:

Social Norms

The interaction between individual behaviours and collective behavioural “rules” that shape a) how people behave and b) how people expect others to behave in order to either maintain or change how women engage with markets.

Overview of the Drivers of Social Norm Change

Social norms are not static, and change as a result of various and overlapping factors. As Bicchieri et al. (2014) note, norms do not simply disappear, but are modified or replaced. Even the stickiest norms can reach a tipping point where they are replaced by newer norms.¹⁴

¹² Muñoz Boudet, Ana Maria, Patti Petesch, Carolyn Turk and Angelica Thumala. On Norms and Agency: Conversations about Gender Equality with Women and Men in 20 Countries. The World Bank. 2012. <http://bit.ly/2bfJk5D>

¹³ Bicchieri, Cristina, Jan Willem Lindemans and Ting Jiang. A structured approach to a diagnostic of collective practices. *Frontiers in Psychology*.

¹⁴ Marcus, Rachel and Harper, Caroline. *Gender Justice and Social Norms: Processes of Change for Adolescent Girls*. Overseas Development Institute. 2014.

People are likely to challenge norms when they experience conflict between these and alternative standards for behaviour, particularly when they perceive the former as being harmful to themselves or the community.¹⁵ Alternatively, social norms may shift when people begin to experience the economic benefits of new behaviours, although this is by no means given. Interviews from SDVC revealed that as improved dairy practices led to economic benefits, social norms affecting women's mobility and decision-making began to relax.

Drivers of social norm change come in multiple forms. Exposure to alternative discourses, values and role models through education, social mobilisation, and labour force participation can be associated with changes in norms. Formal policies, such as new government legislation on inheritance rights that allow daughters and sons an equal right to inherit parents' property can relax existing social norms on male heir preference.

An important caveat is that social norm changes may not always be permanent. Relaxation of and resistance to social norms can sometimes be temporary. For example, conflict and displacement can trigger shifts as women temporarily take on traditionally "male" economic, governance and community roles. Furthermore, significant behavioural departures from certain norms do not necessarily mean that traditional norms have changed. In fact, new roles and responsibilities can co-exist with traditional norms. For example, Rao (2012) shows that changes in women's roles, independence and mobility, as exemplified in their employment in the garment sector, still co-exist with traditional social norms surrounding women's home responsibilities.¹⁶

4.2. The influence of social norms on women's engagement in market systems

An analysis of case study findings revealed a set of social norms that commonly affect women's economic empowerment that influence and play out differently in unique contexts.

Norms as constraints

In the context of market systems, women and men often occupy different economic spheres, due in large part to social norms that define acceptable roles and behaviours for women and men. Across most contexts, women are more likely than men to work as unpaid family workers, in the informal sector or part-time so that they can combine work with care responsibilities. In agriculture, the majority of women have smaller plots and grow less profitable crops. Women's participation in agricultural production is often underestimated because tasks are designated as "family labour" or "domestic responsibilities", and thus not regarded as productive activities.¹⁷ In entrepreneurship, women tend to manage smaller firms that concentrate on less remunerative "female" sectors. Even in formal employment, in many contexts women tend to work in "female" occupations for lower returns than men. Thus, regardless of whether women are farmers, entrepreneurs or employees, many are "caught in a productivity trap: working hard on an uneven playing field with unequal access to productive inputs."¹⁸

This state of affairs is not fully due to social norms, and results from myriad and overlapping constraints such as physical market access, personal preferences, discriminatory formal rules, etc. However, certain social norms appear to play a significant role.

The social norms most frequently mentioned by programme s as constraining women include (in order)

15 Packer, Dominic. On Being With Us and Against Us: A Normative Conflict Model of Dissent in Social Groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*. 2008.

16 Rao, Nitya. Breadwinners and Homemakers: Migration and Changing Conjugal Expectations in Rural Bangladesh. *Journal of Development Studies* 48(1), pp 26-40.

17 Twyman, Jennifer, Juliana Muriel and Maria Alejandra Garcia. Identifying women farmers: Informal gender norms as institutional barriers to recognizing women's contributions to agriculture. *Journal of Gender, Agriculture and Food Security*. 1(2), pp. 1-17. 2015.

18 World Bank. 2012. *Ibid*.

- Gender segregation of sectors and tasks, and perceived appropriate types of work between women and men (traditional versus non-traditional sectors, tasks, etc.)
- Gendered division of decision-making spheres and capabilities (in the household, workplace, community, public sphere)
- Restrictions on mobility, often linked to issues around women’s ‘security’, and social norms around men’s responsibility/burden to keep families (and women) safe
- Traditional division of labour and time-use (unpaid versus paid care work and responsibilities)
- Restrictions on women’s inheritance and ownership of assets
- Acceptance of gender-based violence and sexual harassment in ‘public’ spheres

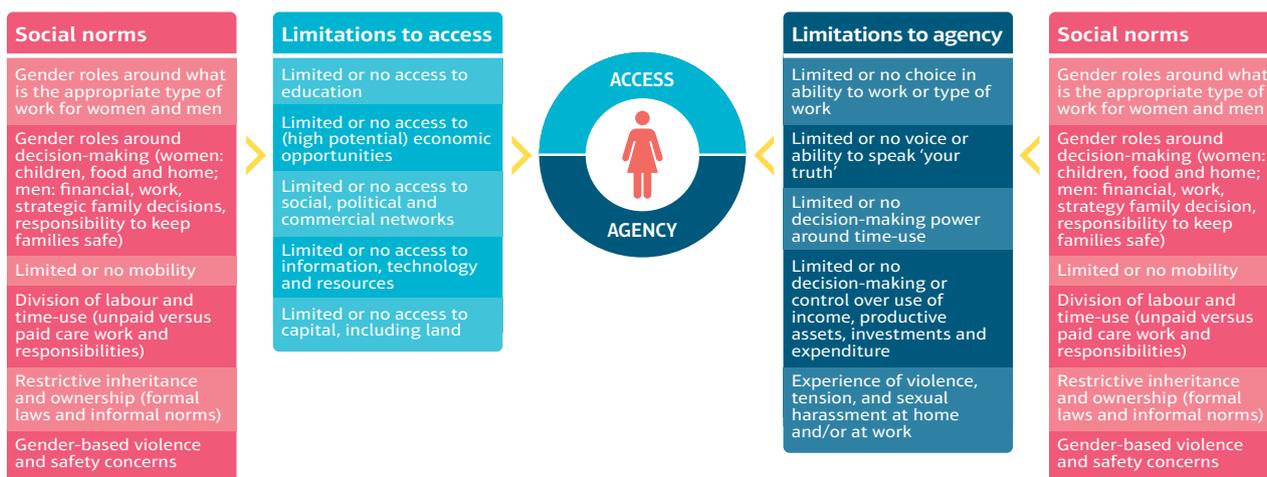
Each of the norms listed above affect women in different ways (and to differing extents) given the context. They are explored in further detail below, with examples drawn from the case studies.

Some of the common themes for how they affect women’s access and agency are presented in the graphic below.

Norms defining “appropriate” work for women and men. Both of the case studies revealed how perceptions about what others in the reference group see as appropriate work for women

Figure 3: Common social norms constraining women’s access and agency

Common constraints to women’s access and agency



and men influence individual and household decisions. In the case of SDVC, the definition of appropriate work for women centred on safety concerns associated with travelling away from home, as well as the need to complete household care responsibilities. This meant that women would not traditionally take on roles beyond the daily care of cows, as it enabled them to conduct their work on the homestead and not move from place to place and engage with strangers. Norms defining the type of household work deemed unacceptable for men such as cooking and cleaning, as described by SOBA focus group discussion participants, influences the time that women have available to spend on other activities.

Decision-making norms. Norms about who in the household should have the final say in economic decisions have major implications for women’s economic agency. For example, male and female SOBA farmers said that according to their local culture the man has the final say in all business decision-making. Male farmers said they knew of instances where a decision was made jointly, but the man received the acknowledgement for the decision. When this was discussed with the women, female participants said; *“If it goes well the man gets credit. If not, the wife is seen as interfering and at fault.”* In this context, there seems to be an issue

with ensuring that men were publically (outside of the household) recognised for decisions that aligned with commonly accepted masculine norms. Male farmers are respected by their community for being providers and decision-makers and deviation from this would bring shame onto the entire family.

Many female SOBA vegetable traders also said that their husbands were the final decision makers, as they first inform and then get their husbands' consent for their activities and plans. However, they also described joint decision making at the household level, with husbands and wives accustomed to listening, and taking counsel from their partners.

Limited mobility. Restrictions to a woman's mobility can result from social norms that define her household roles and responsibilities (thereby obliging her to be at home to complete her tasks and provide care). However social norms specific to a woman's mobility can define when, where and why it is 'acceptable' for women to travel outside the home. For example, in SDVC, it is not socially acceptable for women producers located near a market place to venture out in the evenings. Women from midway and remotely located groups state that it is all right for women to go to market places to purchase personal and household items but not for the purpose of selling milk or buying cattle feed/medicine. This is gradually changing since there are households where the men are not always present (e.g. women-headed households, or where a male member works away from home), and women go to market by necessity.

Box 3: SOBA – Appropriate work for women and men

Women farmers said that *“If a woman did an activity that men should do, like field preparation, a woman would not feel happy or loved by her husband.”*

Norms around unpaid care work. The time burden associated with unpaid care work is a consistent, major barrier to women's economic advancement, and a prime example where roles and activities in the household are perceived as inflexible.¹⁹ In many contexts, there is a perception that these roles cannot change and that sanctions are imminent if socially-accepted behaviours are not followed. However, findings from SOBA suggested that some household

Box 4: SDVC - Significance of community Location

It was evident from the research that the location of the communities and distance/time (road quality) from the nearest digital fat testing milk collection point resulted in considerable differences for women dairy producers with respect to access to markets, interaction with other VC actors, and increased income from milk sales. Time, costs and logistics associated with transportation are a factor, as well as community ideas about when and where women should travel.

roles may be more flexible than the men and women describe in order to protect the men's masculine reputation and public image. Understanding the differences between the reality of household norms and what households describe as reality to others could give insight into what is actually possible for women, and at what income level. This is what this paper refers to as 'current situation basis' and is discussed further below. In essence, it means that people perceive norms to be static and based on their current situation. Yet, most norms are dynamic and change significantly when women's situations change. For

example, women vegetable farmers with fewer resources appear to have much less ability to negotiate ways to alleviate their unpaid care work, whereas female traders are often able to hire additional household help.

¹⁹ Thorpe, Jodie and Mar Maestre. Understanding unpaid care work to empower women in market systems approaches. <https://beamexchange.org/resources/750/>

Box 5: Gendered household roles

One female farmer interviewed for the SOBA case said, *“If a man spends hours cooking he is not putting his family’s welfare first. However if a husband was not able to provide because of physical or mental limitations that is accepted and understood by the family and the community.” “The children’s and family’s welfare must be maintained and this is expected by society.”*

The farm women said that they get their happiness and recognition in their communities through their friendships, family and neighbours. If they are appropriate (submissive) to their husbands, their children will be blessed and successful. One participant said – *“I am here and blessed because of my mother who was submissive to her husband, and I am someone that the family can be proud of”.*

Land ownership and restrictive inheritance. Legal title to an asset at the household and business levels determine to a large extent, decision making over the use of the assets. As men typically hold the title deed to the house and land, they make the final decisions in those domains. This is especially crucial in access to credit where collateral is required, which women frequently do not have access to. For example, men interviewed with SOBA said; *“Only men have titles to property (house), provide money for rent, are responsible for decision making in business, and make house repairs.”* Box 6 on Financial Sector Deepening Zambia provides additional details on issues related to land ownership in this context.

Box 6: Inheritance Rights and Social Norms for Land Ownership Financial Sector Deepening Zambia (FSDZ)

FSDZ is a market systems DFID-funded programme established in 2013 with a mandate to increase financial inclusion, by partnering with financial service providers. They are aiming to reach 50 percent of women, though much of its work is still at the research and design phase.

In the FSDZ context men are the customary owners of land, and even when a man passes away, the land is typically seized by his relatives, leaving his widow landless. However, only about 15 percent of land in Zambia is cultivated, and thereby is unused land available. The government recently put in place regulations to overcome this social norm by requiring all districts, when assigning and titling new land, to achieve targets of 30-40 percent for women’s ownership. While this is a huge advance, unless women have access to financial services– e.g., asset finance such as leasing to purchase equipment for land preparation, input credit for seeds and agrichemicals, and savings to smooth cash management on a day-to-day basis (particularly in the lean season prior to harvest) – they will not be able to take advantage of this shifting policy. FSDZ, by promoting women’s financial inclusion, will enable women to leverage the significant changes taking place around land ownership.

Gender based violence and sexual harassment. Social norms making it acceptable for men to harass women in workplaces, or women who are alone in the streets also represent a constraint to women's engagement in markets. For example, SDVC identified issues around women's mobility. The programme found that women and men noted concerns about women's safety going to and from work, as well as a very real potential of sexual harassment when women venture out alone, particularly in the evening or at a distance from those who know them.

Norms as opportunities

Relatively few practitioners or interviewees described existing social norms as representing opportunities for women. Rather, programmes responded that the lifting or shifting of existing norms would present themselves as market opportunities.

Nonetheless, some interesting findings from the SOBA case provide an example for where existing social norms provide space for women to engage in and benefit from economic activities in certain sectors, and which might be leveraged to further empower women. The experiences of women traders described in Box 7 illustrate this point. The idea is that social norms are not always constraints, but can also be opportunities. There could be a social norm that ensures that girls go to school as in the example below. This social norm presents opportunities for girls to become economically empowered.

Box 7: SOBA vegetable traders – empowered through tradition

Marie Kamara is a successful trader for 20 years. Her mother was also a trader. All of her children have graduated from college with the support from her enterprise and from her husband, an office worker. There is joint decision making with her husband. She has control of her income and reinvests into the enterprise. She would like to expand but is not sure of alternative sources of credit. She says that although she knows how to make a profit she lacks knowledge about financing and credit.

Aramatu Mansaray has been in vegetable wholesale trading since she was 8 and she is now 33. From her enterprise she has built her own house which is in her name. Her husband, a surveyor, is supportive and pays for household expenses. Her profits go back into the enterprise. She befriends the wife of the farmer and over time they build a trusting relationship. When she goes into a new community she goes to the Chief first and will interact with his wife. Her daughter is also very interested in trading.

Additionally, differences emerged between the negotiating ability of women traders who had their own enterprises to get support for unpaid care responsibilities, which was not the case for women farmers. This suggests that when women have their own trade enterprise and must travel for business, allowances can be made for support from family members or paid assistance. The women traders are provided more time flexibility in managing their household chores due to their advanced economic situation. This insight is supported by the much higher level of unpaid household burdens of the female farmers who are less independent and less economically empowered. That said, non-remunerative gender roles do not change (i.e. women cook, men make home repairs, etc.) between men and women, although the female traders have greater authority in their time and activity choices, and are able to negotiate resources (paid care work) and wider family support (i.e. in-laws, other women in the family) to reduce their unpaid work burdens.

Common sanctions that maintain social norms and supports for challenging them

Social norm theory and literature tells us that negative sanctions (ranging in level of severity) maintain social norms by reinforcing individual preferences and behaviours within a given reference group (Bicchieri et al. 2014). It also tells us that in order to promote changes to social norms, we must understand how to reduce these sanctions or mitigate their impact on women, as well as identify positive sources of support for new behaviours. Therefore, the section below focuses on identifying key sanctions and support mechanisms that affect women’s ability to address and work within or beyond the social norms that surround them taken from the two in-depth cases. These are summarised in the table below and then discussed in more detail.

Table 2: Common sanctions and supports from the case studies

Sanctions	Examples of supports for new behaviours
Shame for the male head of household	Male household members taking on more unpaid care work
Teasing and criticism of men and women	Male household members supporting women in their household to hire unpaid care work
Sexual harassment for women being out alone	Communities and household members supporting women to work
Religious sanction (i.e. black magic)	Communities, male household members and mother-in-law’s supporting women to be mobile and access markets
	Women supporting other women to take risks and defy social norms
	Women role models influencing other women to defy social norms

The most common sanction was men being shamed by the community they lived in if they undertook domestic chores, or ‘women’s work.’ Male focus group participants with SOBA made statements such as; *“Only women do cooking and laundry. If men do this they would lose respect in the community as they would be seen as being dominated by their wife.”* Men were also concerned that speculation might be made by the community that the man is under a ‘*woman’s black magic.*’ This black magic was described to cause embarrassment to the family.

Box 8: ROLE MODELS: Spotlight on a female livestock health worker with SDVC

Msmt Shiuli Begum is a livestock health worker (LHW) in Hatibandha Union in Bangladesh. She joined the SDVC programme in 2007 and received training. She serves producers in about 5 groups within a range of around 3.5 km. She provides LHW services such as vaccinations, de-worming and care for seasonal diseases such as pneumonia and foot-rot. Shiuli also offers practical advice on the care and feeding of cows such as the preparation of cattle feed (molasses making). She has both male and female customers and is comfortable working with both stating *“when I demonstrate my expertise and the cow recovers from illness, men also trust me.”* Shiuli is the lone woman member of the local LHW association. She was introduced to the pharmaceutical agents through the LHW association and peer LHWs, and pharmaceutical products are now delivered to her home by the company agent. Although Shiuli initially received resistance from her family and community in taking on a non-traditional role, respect and support for her have grown as she persisted despite such concerns. Even the community elite now support her and use her as a role model for their daughters and wives. She has also received a ‘Joyeetha’ award given by Ministry of Women and Children Affairs for high performing women. Shiuli closed her interview by saying *“I have come to this stage after overcoming a lot of problems. I want other girls to follow me in this profession.”*

Bringing shame onto one's family is the major deterrent to unusual or unethical behaviour according to the women wholesale traders. To mitigate these sanctions, women mentioned that it was important to ensure that men were publically recognised for the work that aligned with commonly accepted masculine norms.

Female focus group discussion participants with SOBA said that they are able to move around and travel for business, though they first inform their husbands of all of their business activities to gain their consent and approval. As women have gained experience, confidence and income from their enterprises they are on more equal footing with their husbands and male market players. As the enterprise becomes central to the family's economic well-being, women receive more support from their families and others (though, generally not by men) in carrying out domestic chores and responsibilities.

In Bangladesh, women dairy producers stated that they have not faced any insurmountable social barriers from their family or community in participating in programme activities. Respondents reported that there is now no objection to women taking on non-traditional activities in the dairy sector. However, early in the intervention, women and their households were criticised by the community when women took on service provision roles, women faced opposition from family members and communities, and it took time for customers of services to recognise and appreciate the value of women's work. There are still stated concerns about women's security, particularly if they venture out in the evening. This is partly based on the real potential for violence and sexual harassment, but also reflects norms around the responsibility of men to keep the women of their households safe. Men felt the personal need and social pressure to protect women and not doing so could bring shame to the family if a women in their household experienced an unsafe situation outside the home. It should also be noted that fear for safety can also be a way to justify controlling someone. In order to mitigate these risks and potential community disapproval, the women health workers involved in SDVC would assure men of their safety by taking a male relative with them to tend to calls after dark.

In Sierra Leone, women mentioned that black magic, a force outside of human control, kept them within social norms and behaviours acceptable to their community and consistent with their faith. Behaviours are reinforced by a common religious faith of "following the true path" which leads to their children being blessed. Women are unwilling to risk potential harm to their children associated with challenging norms, even if it would represent an improvement to their economic situation.

Across both programmes, social sanctions influenced whether or not women and men decided to defy social norms in adopting new market behaviours. The stronger the sanction and the more the sanction was perceived to be out of their control to change, the less women and men tended to defy it. This shows the importance of not only identifying the norm itself and what market constraint it links to, but also for programmes to understand the severity of sanctions and the likelihood of avoiding them through appropriate support mechanisms. The sanctions applied to women who defy existing norms are closely linked to women experiencing negative unintended consequences from programme activities. The research implies that if a sanction is strong and is unlikely to change by the indirect actions of the programme, it will be important for programmers to assess the risks of this proposed change for women. The programme could then design supports to mitigate these risks or decide to not take on the activity.

The next two sections consider current methods market systems programmes are using to identify and assess social norms, and the strategies for working around and/or directly addressing these norms.

4.3 Methods used by market systems programmes to identify and assess social norms affecting women's empowerment

Interviews with market systems practitioners from both the in-depth cases and mini cases revealed differences in their understanding of social norms, however all interviewees were familiar with the terms. Additionally, they articulated key social norms affecting women's empowerment within their programmes (as described above, in section 4.2), although they were more likely to use terms such as 'key market constraints' or 'informal rules' that affect women. Almost all interviewees noted the utility of developing a deeper understanding of social norms, and how this understanding could influence their programming.

A few key findings and lessons on what is currently working are presented below.

Using mixed research methods to understand how social norms affect access to services

Mixed methods approaches are often necessary for understanding the complex interplay of factors that determine women's access and agency within a given market system.²⁰ Including qualitative research methods in particular (such as those employed for the purposes of this study - see the toolkit or annex), allows practitioners to gain insight into why individuals are making certain decisions, and where "sticky" social norms may present an insurmountable barrier to behaviour change. Such research can also provide critical information about the risks of sanction to women who opt in to new economic opportunities promoted by a given intervention.

Conducting periodic community-level gender assessments

In order to understand if and how gender norms are shifting, a number of programmes described conducting periodic gender assessments designed to reveal positive and/or negative changes associated with shifts in how communities perceive women's engagement in the market. It is not enough for programmes to conduct an initial design phase gender analysis, as social norms change over time and change as women beneficiaries' positions change. For example, the Making Markets Work for the Chars (M4C) programme, described in greater detail in Box 9 (overleaf), conducts an annual gender assessment that explores social norms and how the programme can better address norms acting as market constraints to women.

Capture more than only women's perspectives within your research efforts

In many cases, market systems programmes forget to specifically capture women's perspectives, preferences and needs in their market systems analyses. Yet, when programmes explicitly aim to empower women, the opposite tends to happen. Often programmes speak only to women about women's empowerment and social norms that affect women. Particularly when researching social norms this approach is very limiting. As noted in the M4C case, it is important to capture the perspectives of men and non-targeted women beneficiaries to corroborate the findings and see what differences arise.

Understand current situation bias

The research with the SOBA programme points out that women's and men's perceptions of how gendered roles are inflexible versus flexible is from their own current perspective. Women and men are less aware of how these gendered roles can change if their situation were to change, such as a change to their job or position at work. That is to say, their current situations bias them in believing that their own perceived flexibility of roles is common across situations. Often market systems programmes focus on upgrading schemes that move women and men into new and better jobs or income status. It is important to understand the social norms surrounding current positions, as well as shifts associated with where the programme aims for women to be. Using triangulation and interviews with different sub-groups of women and men will help to better understand how social norms affect unique sub-groups in different ways.

²⁰ Markel, E. 2014. Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment in Private Sector Development. <https://beamexchange.org/resources/325/>

Box 9: Understanding social norms from a community perspective: market for the Jamuna, Padma and Teesta chars (M4C) Bangladesh

M4C aims to reduce poverty and the vulnerability of households who live in river islands (chars) formed by three major rivers in north and northwestern Bangladesh. The project aims to capitalise on the high soil fertility and land availability to transform the chars into a functioning market system that provides opportunities for employment and income generation for the poor. M4C works to facilitate growth in agriculture, handicrafts, transport, and financial services. WEE is an integral part of M4C's programming, and gender is mainstreamed into every step of the project cycle.

The project believes that understanding social norms is crucial to effective programming, particularly in the geographically isolated and socially conservative context of the chars. The division of labour often keeps women home-bound, which presents challenges in an environment where people must go to the mainland for economic opportunities. That being said, M4C recognises that every community and household has its own specific socio-economic context, which must be taken into account.

To do this, M4C conducts gendered market research to identify ways to improve the position of men and women in selected value chains. They explore existing social norms, and map out potential entry points for women to engage in new activities that align with existing social norms. This annual gender assessment regularly captures shifts in how communities perceive women's participation in the market. This enables the team to design and adapt interventions vis-à-vis a deeper understanding of existing social norms and any shifts that appear to be taking place. The assessment captures attitudes and perspectives from all layers of the market system, including women themselves, their husbands, community members, and service providers.

Pursue a deeper understanding of gender roles, and norm and sanction strength

SOBA found that using group exercises and discussions for assessing the degree of gender role flexibility at the household and enterprise levels is important for understanding what kinds of shifts in norms and sanctions may be possible. The research tool (provided in the full SOBA case study) does not directly ask respondents about social norms, but gathers information on social norms indirectly by discussing flexibility in gender roles and specific tasks within a sub-sector. This focus allows the programme to obtain in-depth sensitive information about social norms and sanctions. Asking people directly about what social norms exist in their community can be confusing and difficult for people to respond to. Finding a way to obtain this information in a less direct and culturally appropriate manner produces more reliable results.

4.4. Promising strategies for addressing social norms to catalyse systemic empowerment

Research findings revealed a variety of ways that market systems programmes work within, around, or against social norms that present constraints to women's economic empowerment. Our research suggests that there are two main categories of strategies and tactics that programmes implement to address social norms: indirect and direct.

This report has defined these strategies and tactics in the following way:

- **Indirect strategy:** Strategies that work within existing social norms to address market constraints for women. These strategies do not attempt to address social norms constraining women's market engagement 'head-on', and instead design interventions that change systems and relationships, which may lead to shifts in key social norms over time. These programmes choose to work within existing social norms and assume that the impact of the resulting economic gains for women will change the social norms over time. Currently if market systems programmes are addressing social norms, they tend to do so by implementing indirect strategies.
- **Direct strategy:** Strategies that seek to intentionally shift social norms by calling out the norm with the target community and developing activities to change the social norm itself. For example, SDVC conducts an awareness intervention that promotes reflection and dialogue among male and female members of the same households and communities about gender issues and key social norms constraining women. Currently it is less common for market systems programmes to implement direct strategies.

The following section provides an explanation of these strategies and tactics, and in some cases, the results of their implementation.

Addressing social norms indirectly

The majority of programmes included in the study described strategies for working within existing social norms to improve women's market engagement. The focus of these interventions is not directly changing the social norm itself in the short-run, but changing the behaviours of actors in the system to improve women's economic situations. The strategy rests on the idea that changing select relationships and access to economic opportunities will minimise the potential for backlash and eventually affect social norms as women's positions expand. Within this type of programming there tends to be an assumption that economic gains for programme beneficiaries will eventually affect social norms, as more and more women change their situations. Some programmes are testing these assumptions and others are not. This approach was observed in more conservative contexts, like in Somalia and certain areas of Bangladesh, where addressing social norms directly can be met with risks of sanctions against women.

Below are some of the tactics programmes are using for working within existing social norms, which can then lead indirectly to norm change:

Utilising learning and adaptive management practices to address social norms

An adaptive style of management (as exemplified by the Alliances Lesser Caucuses Programme, described in Box 10, overleaf) can help to create flexibility, reactivity, and an intuitive inclusion of gender in all aspects of programming. If leadership and management is able to form safe spaces for dialogue and exchange, as well as offer needed capacity building around gender issues, the programme team members will speak frankly and openly about gender norms. Team members are then better able to navigate local contexts with sensitivity.

Selecting sub-sectors or market systems where women are already economically active.

The sub-sector selection process is an instrumental aspect of most market systems approaches. Programmes that focus on sub-sectors where women are already active helps reduce the risk of pushing women into roles where they face backlash and sanctions due to existing social norms. For example, SOBA's early programme design explicitly included gender equity and social inclusion considerations in the selection of sub-sectors. Multiple other programmes also followed similar strategies including the Promoting Inclusive Markets in Somalia (PIMS), described in Box 11.

Encouraging new business models to reach women within existing social norms. Local market actors with incentives to improve their services or outreach to marginalised women can

Box 10: Adaptive management practices and addressing social norms: Alliances Lesser Caucasus Programme (ALCP)

The Alliances Lesser Caucasus Programme (ALCP) is a market development project implemented by Mercy Corps Georgia (with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) that focuses on the dairy, beef, and honey sub-sectors in the Kvemo Kartli, Samtskhe Javakheti and Ajara regions in Southern Georgia. ALCP's aim is to improve the incomes of poor rural households by aiding small-scale livestock farmers gain better access to information, markets, services and technologies. Since its inception in 2008, the Alliances programme has ensured that programme management, tools and operations and monitoring systems are all geared to operationalising women's economic empowerment (WEE). Gender is mainstreamed into every aspect of the programme cycle, from fully gendered market analyses to results chains and indicators.

A unique feature of ALCP is its understanding of the link between staff learning, open communication and how project staff understand and internalise gender norms. ALCP sees this understanding by staff as a key reason why they have been able to successfully promote changes to gender norms within the communities in which they work. The adaptive style of management has purposely created a programme ethos that supports flexibility, reactivity, and an intuitive inclusion of gender. By forming a safe space for dialogue, programme team members are encouraged to speak frankly and openly about gender norms. When combined with management's messaging on the importance of thinking about gender and social norms, the process strips away misconceptions and pressures which surround perceptions of gender. In addition, robust capacity building training ensures team members are equipped with the confidence, knowledge and tools to enact change to their fullest potential.

prove effective in developing new business models that fit within existing social norms. For example, Katalyst supported large private seed companies to expand their input distribution channels in the northern remote areas of Bangladesh to become more gender inclusive. Katalyst assisted with market research, developing a business model, and showing that women took leading roles in vegetable production and were an important clientele. Ultimately, the input companies were able to design and sell, via female door-to-door sales agents, small affordable packages of quality seeds to customers, 90 percent of whom were women. One leading company, Lalteer seeds, experienced a 50 percent hike in sales of mini-packet seeds to homestead producers in the chars. As a result women are growing more vegetables more efficiently, with positive implications on the household consumption of vegetables as well as increased disposable income for women from selling excess vegetables. Katalyst will build on this success by designing interventions to attract buyers to purchase from the farm gate so that women have access to output markets, without compromising their mobility. Such activities ensure that women are able to access markets without compromising their ability to meet household responsibilities or challenge norms around mobility.

Supporting women to move into higher value activities.

Where women move into more profitable and respected roles, it can positively impact their voice at the household-level, allowing them more room to negotiate resource allocation and unpaid care tasks. For example, SDVC encouraged women to take on new roles, such as becoming input providers and artificial inseminators. Women health workers and input providers reported that the project brought about changes in social norms so that women are accepted for their new roles, with significant technical and management responsibility. This acceptance is related to women's competence and the value of the services they provide (often preferred over men due

**Box 11: Examining and selecting culturally-appropriate sub-sectors:
Promoting Inclusive Markets in Somalia (PIMS)**

Implemented by DAI, Promoting Inclusive Markets in Somalia (PIMS) is a three-year DFID-funded programme that uses a market systems approach to bring about systemic and sustainable market changes in Central Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland. It works in six sub-sectors, including banana, sesame, fisheries, livestock production, poultry and dairy. In addition, PIM's complementary cash-for-work component aims to provide, upgrade and maintain productive infrastructure to create 500,000 workdays. Women's economic empowerment is an explicit target.

All sub-sectors for PIMS must not only have growth potential, pro-poor impact, and feasibility of facilitating change, but they must also demonstrate impact on women and youth. DAI used existing secondary sources and follow-up field research to ensure that the chosen sub-sectors had low-income women already participating, or that there was evidence of potential for more women to begin participating. After an intensive screening process, six sub-sectors were studied in-depth and appropriate gender targets were set for each value chain. For example, more women are known to work in the banana fields than men, and thus the programme target was set to reach 70 percent of women. In the sesame value chain, where more men are traditionally involved in the fields, the target for women's participation was set at a more realistic 25-30 percent. In addition to the gendered value chain analyses, DAI also undertook a separate gender assessment to enrich the former. The assessment provided two types of knowledge – (1) an overview of broader norms, cultural sensitivities, and structural issues that characterise the different regions of Somalia, and (2) actionable guidelines on how to realise gender targets for each sub-sector.

to what is recognised as their reliability and commitment to offering good services). However, the lack of other women adopting these roles suggests that there are still social norms restraining women, even if social sanctions do not occur for those who have taken on new roles.

Taking into consideration the physical location of women to market.

Where women are physically located and its distance from the market can have a significant impact on empowerment outcomes for women. For example, women producer groups from SDVC expressed that they had increased incomes from their dairy business. However, distance from the collection centre was key to securing positive outcomes due to norms around mobility and the roles of women being close to the homestead. That is, the nearest producer group was the strongest in terms of volume of milk production, dairy care and management, and a fairly high income from milk sales. Most of the producers owned cross-breed cows. Given that the location of the dairy fat testing and collection point was within the village, it was easy for the women themselves to deliver the milk, or they could ask another family member, including children, to do so. The women proudly stated that milk sales were an important contribution to household income. They also mentioned the reinvestment of income from milk sales in other productive ventures, such as the lease or purchase of agricultural land, acquiring more cows, etc.

Tracking social norms changes that emerge from women's economic empowerment.

Shifts in social norms may emerge from women's empowerment outcomes; however their sustainability over time depends on systems change (not just change among select market actors in the sector). The Market Development Facility (MDF) implemented by Cardno offers a unique framework for identifying whether partnerships with market actors are also leading to systemic change in norms.²¹ They map change through initial, intermediate, advanced and

21 Market Development Facility Framework. <https://beamexchange.org/resources/638/>

mature stages of the partnership. For example, during initial stages, MDF assesses partnerships for their ability to innovate and provide targeted women with access to services, employment and other benefits. By the mature stage, MDF expects to see sector-wide sustainable access for many women to a range of economic opportunities thanks to replication and crowding in, as well as social norms changes related to women's financial control, productive decision-making and negotiation of their workloads.

Addressing social norms directly

While most programmes interviewed design their interventions to work within existing social norms, leading to economic gains that may eventually affect social norms, social norms may also be addressed directly.

Promote dialogue and reflection within communities

The SDVC case demonstrates that confronting gendered social norms head-on can be possible, for example by conducting gender awareness interventions at the community level promoting dialogue to expand women's opportunities (Box 12). While this approach takes sophisticated contextual knowledge, activities that promote reflection and dialogue among male and female members of the same households and communities can create openings for women to take on new value chain roles, such as input providers and artificial inseminators. Most of the respondents reported that there is now no objection to women taking on non-traditional activities in the dairy sector, only concerns about security of the women in general when travelling outside of the community.

Bringing recognition and visibility to early adopters

Another strategy revealed by the research is to bring recognition and visibility to leaders and role models for behaviours consistent with social norms that promote women's empowerment. These include early adopters who take advantage of new opportunities, as well as those who take on new roles out of financial necessity. Families living in more difficult financial situations

Box 12: SDVC - Community Dialogue around social norms

In order to confront the social biases that affected women's opportunities and access, CARE put in place an initiative to promote community dialogue and raise awareness regarding gendered social norms. Day one of a two-day dialogue starts by explaining the concepts of gender and community norms. After discussing the basic concepts, the workshop facilitator leads a session on gender equity format analysis. For example, the facilitator asks the participants; "*Do we understand why we need to address the inequity issue*". Through a visual exercise, the facilitator is able to raise awareness around gender equity in the community focusing on the differences in five component areas: access to education, assets, rights, control over assets and power. This then leads to a discussion on the importance of gender equity in families and society. The next exercise groups men and women separately so that they can prioritise their needs among the five components, following which men and women's groups come together to share their thinking. This process is repeated to promote analysis, discussion and greater understanding regarding gender and perceptions in the community. CARE has found this to be a successful way to raise and question existing social norms acting as constraints to women's empowerment. There are multiple reasons for why the trainings work. A few examples include that the training is participatory in method and therefore highly sensitive to the context, and that includes both men and women, which helps men to become champions of supporting change as well.

are often willing to adopt new income earning activities for both women and men and, as the SOBA case revealed, these women can eventually be recognised as leaders in their families and communities.

A similar example emerged from the SDVC case, where one of the leading women service providers was a divorced woman who had to provide for her family. Such women are often driven by necessity to step outside socially prescribed roles. And, due to their challenges, community members can be more sympathetic to their plight and support non-traditional roles and activities. However, this does not necessarily discount their potential for leadership and role modelling, which women in more fortunate circumstances may decide to follow – particularly if there is economic benefit.

Taking a multi-pronged (indirect and direct) approach

Finally, a few of the programmes interviewed use what could be described as a ‘multi-pronged’ strategy to challenge social norms in both direct and indirect ways. These programmes noted that given the fact that social norms are deeply entrenched in many of the countries where market systems programmes work, developing multi-pronged strategies can promote the most profound changes. For example, ELAN implemented by Adam Smith International executes this dual strategy in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Box 13, overleaf). SDVC also works on changing social norms from multiple angles. The programme works in a more traditional women’s sub-sector (dairy) in order to reach larger numbers of women in a culturally appropriate manner, but also confronts gendered social norms head-on by. Bangladesh has seen significant results from this programme whereby over 35,000 dairy producers have doubled their income.

The case studies and examples presented in the previous section show how programmes are employing a variety of research, implementation and results measurement strategies to address social norms. It provides insights into the ways in which programmes are seeking to influence social norms, directly or indirectly. However, more work is needed to deepen the understanding of gendered social norms and how they engage with market systems, and to implement this understanding within programmes. The section below highlights recommendations for practitioners, policy-makers and the research community.

Box 13: Taking a multi-pronged approach to addressing social norms: ÉLAN – Democratic Republic of Congo (ÉLAN RDC)

ÉLAN RDC is a £50m M4P programme funded by DFID and implemented by Adam Smith International. ÉLAN RDC's principal goal is to reduce poverty through sustainable and inclusive economic development. The programme works across a number of sectors, including agriculture, finance, renewable energy and transportation, and aims to increase the incomes of over 1.3 million poor men and women by 2021. ÉLAN RDC's portfolio has evolved to actively promote WEE by consciously engaging with gendered social norms that permeate the context.

Multi-pronged approach to addressing social norms.

To this effect, ÉLAN RDC employs a three-pronged approach to address social norms.

- Firstly, ÉLAN RDC recognises that if its interventions are too subversive, they may instigate violent reprisals and suspicions which can disempower and endanger women. Thus, the programme takes great effort to understand the limitations and constraints posed by social norms, so that it can adjust its priorities and interventions accordingly.
- Secondly, ÉLAN RDC utilizes strategies that reduce the most inhibiting aspects of social norms. Efforts have included delivering agricultural trainings in areas/ lots that are conveniently accessible for women to mitigate mobility constraints, as well as introducing improved cook-stoves and pico-solar lamps that reduce women's burden of domestic responsibilities while simultaneously increasing their savings.
- Thirdly, ÉLAN RDC also works to challenge social norms by carefully shifting the perceptions of its programme partners. For example, the programme facilitated a joint-research piece with the country's largest mobile network operators (MNOs) that pointed to the untapped potential of women as sales agents. The research showed that recruiting and training female agents may help MNOs to reach potential poor female subscribers – a different client profile than those typically targeted by male agents.

In this way the intervention is also intended to circumvent socio-cultural norms that limit women's control over cash income by providing them with mobile banking facilities, and a means of retaining the income typically taken and controlled by their husbands. ÉLAN RDC has also built business cases for women's productivity to instil inclusive behavioural mindsets among large market actors. To execute its WEE agenda, ÉLAN RDC introduced an innovative model to its programme management structure called the "Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Champion Model". GESI uses a competitive process to select five regional programme staff that have demonstrated strong commitment to empowering women and/or marginalised groups. These staff are then provided with a series of trainings to become "GESI champions" for their respective regions. By de-centralising GESI expertise and responsibilities, ÉLAN RDC ensures that gender considerations are mainstreamed into the program's day-to-day activities. Furthermore, an advantage of this model is that it can engage more men, thereby making gender issues more accessible among all staff. Finally, gender champions are able to collect, synthesise and communicate information more efficiently, thereby developing recommendations accordingly and driving implementation of these recommendations.

5. Key recommendations moving forward

Integrate an exploration of social norms into gendered market analysis.

Understanding social norms and how they differ from individual attitudes, beliefs and values is critical. As noted above in the definitions section, social norms are defined by collective behaviours and expectations within a certain reference group. Unique tactics are needed if people's behaviours are linked to a norm instead of simply their individual attitudes, beliefs and values. Social norms have a high degree of influence on people's behaviours and are 'sticky' or difficult to change. Understanding whether or not a social norm is at the root cause of a market behaviour can help programmes to deepen their understanding of women's market engagement and help programmes to design informed and context specific behaviour change strategies and tactics.

Document strategic planning processes to address gendered social norms.

Between the programmes interviewed there was significant variation between whether or not programmes directly and/or indirectly addressed social norms. Apart from some exceptions which are documented in this paper, market systems programmes that address social norms currently tend to implement indirect strategies. It remains unclear the degree to which this is a deliberate and strategic choice (e.g. because direct programming can negatively affect other aspects of their programmes), or because direct strategies are considered to be higher risk or out of step with the facilitation/indirect nature of market systems implementation. We also lack clear lessons to help us decide whether a direct or indirect or multi-pronged strategy is better and in what instances. It would be helpful for programmes to start documenting their strategic planning processes to better understand why choices were made and the impact at the end of the programme. This means being explicit about assumptions behind these choices, such as beliefs that economic gains will eventually affect social norms, or that directly tackling social norms will not lead to sanctions or backlash.

Understand differentiated empowerment and risks to unique subgroups of women.

Different subsets and groups of women experience changes to their situation differently. Programmes should be as specific and informed as possible about what types of women specific interventions seek to engage and to target. For example, women who are less empowered at the start of an intervention are likely to face increased risks to changes in social norms. Social norms may also differ for women according to their life-stage, as noted in recent research MarketShare Associates conducted in the MENA region for GIZ.²² Therefore, in order to reach or positively affect different subgroups, programmes may need to implement specific risk mitigation measures and monitoring. More generally, a better understanding of how market systems programmes can reflect and mitigate risks of changing gendered social norms for unique subgroups of women would be beneficial.

Understand positive social norms for women.

The paper is mainly focused on gendered social norms that negatively impact women's ability to engage with markets. However, programmes may also identify positive social norms that can be supported that improve women's ability to engage with markets and create market opportunities. This is also a question for research - do these social norms exist, what are they and what are the most appropriate tactics for promoting them?

²² Gettliffe, Emilie and Erin Markel. Women's Economic Empowerment in the MENA Region: Rapid assessment of household-level results. MarketShare Associates for GIZ. 2016. <http://bit.ly/29nckCZ>

Look at gendered social norms around masculinities and how norms affect men’s ability to enhance women’s economic empowerment.

This study focused on how gendered social norms affect women. Yet, unsurprisingly, the research showed that men, their gender identity and how men follow gendered social norms or not play a powerful role in either sanctioning or providing support to women to defy negative norms. In understanding social norms and developing strategies to address them, it is crucial that programmes consider how supports and sanctions affect men as well as women. More broadly, it would be helpful to better understand the gendered social norms that affect men and how to promote changes to these norms in a manner that best promotes women’s economic empowerment in market systems programming.

Track gendered social norms that may be changing indirectly.

We assume that market systems initiatives that offer enhanced economic opportunities and access without directly challenging social norms, still impact social norms. For example, a common theory of change includes: as a woman gains more knowledge, she increases her confidence and skills, and eventually increases her income. We then assume that these changes carry on beyond her increased income to enhance her agency such as increases to household decision-making, voice and changes in general community attitudes and gendered social norms. More rigorous assessment of this assumption could improve the impact of indirect approaches to changing gendered social norms. To support better programming, there is also a need for more publically available impact and/or longitudinal studies that identify the conditions under which this assumption holds true.

Social norms as an indication of systemic change.

There is lots of current interest and exploration in the market systems development world about how to measure systemic change.²³ Given that social norms are a collective and emergent behaviour, and significantly impact market behaviours and power dynamics, the authors would suggest that changes to social norms are an important indication of systemic change. Moving forward, changes to social norms should be included in systemic change frameworks, and measurement and evaluation plans. This study should act as a starting point to tailoring needed tools to assess (systemic) social norm change.

²³ Fowler, Ben and Elizabeth Dunn. Evaluating Systems and Systemic Change for Inclusive Market Development. MarketShare Associates for USAID. 2014. <https://beamexchange.org/resources/147/>; Fowler, Ben and Tim Sparkman. Measuring Systemic Change: A Guide to Domains. MarketShare Associates for USAID. Forthcoming.

6. Conclusion

The review of the academic research revealed a complex world of social norms, roles and belief systems as well as controls, sanctions and supports that affect the way people behave, interact and even think. This academic literature demonstrates that market systems practitioners are on the right track as they incorporate more social analysis and activities into their women's economic empowerment work, but that they have some way to go if our understanding is to be richer and our practice to be more informed and impactful.

The two in-depth cases and the seven mini-cases demonstrate how market systems programmes have been advancing in the incorporation of social norms, as well as revealing significant lessons learned for closing the gap between practice and academic theory. As this paper highlights, good practices already exist that can guide market systems programmes to better address social norms affecting women's engagement in markets.

As market systems development policymakers and practitioners place more emphasis on women's economic empowerment, and incorporate more social analysis and tools into their work, it becomes even more crucial for programmes to identify how social norms influence women's access and agency, and how this assessment can lead to more effective programming. Additional research and piloting, such as on the topics noted above, will be needed in order to more fully incorporate gendered social norms into a market systems context, effectively distilling existing knowledge, documenting practices and developing innovative ways for addressing social norms in market systems work. Particularly, it is important for market systems programmes to test assumptions around using indirect versus direct strategies. Is a deliberate strategy to change social norms a risk for programmes or can this serve as an approach to deepen impact? On the other hand, does the assumption that indirect strategies lead to changes in social norms hold true over time? Developing strategies and rigorous ways to measure the impacts will help to promote deeper and longer lasting systems change that empowers the people who need it most.

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