



Manual on Social Norms and Change

M N U A L N S O C I A L R M S & C A N G E

Introduction
& Bibliography

This manual was produced by the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting: Accelerating Change, under the direction of Nafissatou J. Diop and Cody Donahue.

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The manual draws on a social norms perspective. It uses the definition articulated by the social scientist Cristina Bicchieri, and applies the concepts of social expectations, empirical and normative, to determine whether or not FGM is a social norm in a specific context. The manual also uses and adapts some of the outcomes of the UNICEF Course on Advances in Social Norms, 2010-2015, co-chaired by Cristina Bicchieri and Gerry Mackie at the University of Pennsylvania.

Case studies have been taken from articles and papers by the social scientists Sajeda Amin, Gabriel Dagne, Nafissatou J. Diop, Ellen Gruenbaum, Antanas Mockus and Jean-Philippe Platteau, and from the Saleema Campaign in Sudan, the Tostan programme, the AIDOS/RAINBO manual and UNFPA in Kenya.

The manual is a continuation of previous work by UNICEF and UNFPA, including UNICEF statistical explorations in 2005 and 2013, the UNICEF Innocenti Digest on "Changing a Harmful Social Convention: Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting" (2005), the UNICEF "Coordinated Strategy to Abandon Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in One Generation" (2007), and the UNICEF Innocenti Series on Social Norms and Harmful Practices (2006-2009), all of which were informed by collaboration with social scientist Gerry Mackie, and a multitude of academic and development partners.

The UNICEF and UNFPA country offices in Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania have provided valuable experiences.

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Manual on Social Norms and Change
Introduction & Bibliography

This manual is meant for training programme managers to **promote the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)**. It has been designed under a joint programme of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Joint Programme applies an **innovative approach** to FGM/C abandonment, **using a social norms perspective to guide the selection of an appropriate mix of strategies and activities** most conducive to self-sustained social change.

The programme seeks to contribute to the overall goal set by the 2008 Interagency Statement on Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, reaffirmed by the 2012 United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/146, to support governments, communities, and girls and women in abandoning FGM/C¹ and target 5.3 of the outcome document of the new Sustainable Development Agenda, adopted by world leaders in September 2015: "eliminate all harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation by 2030".

A social norms perspective sheds light on issues that seem complex and sometimes intractable, and offers insights that put attitudinal and collective behavioural change at the forefront of positive social change. Recognizing FGM/C as a social norm entails working through multiple channels to **create a social movement**, and **mobilizing people** among practising groups and other individuals who are influential and make decisions.

The number of people involved may be small at first, but will slowly expand to large-scale coalitions and networks backing a new norm of no longer cutting girls. Implementation of this strategy involves a wide range of stakeholders (governmental, civil society and individuals) from across a variety of sectors, including health, education, child protection, communications and media, and business. The partnerships they form can disseminate acquired knowledge, and foster a shift in social conventions and norms around FGM/C that leads to collective social change and the improved well-being of girls and women.

Through the Joint Programme, there are growing opportunities to use the social norms approach to address other harmful practices that, like FGM/C, are rooted in gender discriminatory norms. In particular, where FGM/C and child marriage coexist **UNFPA AND UNICEF 2014A**, they are typically linked and perceived as necessary for social acceptance and inclusion. Phase I of the Joint Programme addressed FGM/C alongside issues related

¹ See: www.npwj.org/FGM/UN-General-Assembly-Adopts-Worldwide-Ban-Female-Genital-Mutilation.html

to sexual and reproductive health. The issue of child marriage was raised in various countries. Many communities have organized public declarations on abandoning both FGM/C and child marriage.

PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

This manual provides practical examples and theoretical concepts for understanding processes related to attitudinal, behavioural and collective change. It includes the following topics to be covered in a five-day workshop:

- A conceptual framework underlying the strategies for FGM/C abandonment based on social norms perspectives and theories, and a human rights-based approach to development programming;
- The need to address FGM/C as a gender and a human rights issue, and the application of a social norms understanding to gender issues;
- The importance of legislation for social change, and of the interaction between legislative reforms, and moral and social norms;
- The importance of social networks to diffuse and develop strategies for abandonment;
- A shift in communication approaches towards appreciation, inclusion and participation, and the importance of trust and argumentation in changing people's beliefs and expectations;
- Understanding the facts about FGM/C through measurable indicators; and Seven transformative elements for changing beliefs and expectations, and collective and social behaviours harmful to children and women.

In designing this manual, there was an implicit assumption that continuous developments from social sciences and field experiences will, as time goes on, influence the content. Each of six modules can be easily revised and updated to reflect the evolution of terms and concepts².

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

At the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Apply a social norms perspective in order to facilitate change or abandonment of collectively endorsed harmful social norms;
- Use collective strategies to set up strong incentives and group pressure for individuals to adhere to new, more positive norms and behaviours;
- Strengthen the human rights-based approach to development programming through social norms and change.

² For example, previous publications and working documents refer to FGM/C as a self-enforcing social convention, while more recent documents refer to FGM/C as a social norm. This is the result of a process of thinking and further revision during recent years, where social norms theory has been introduced as a refinement of social convention theory. Social convention theory helps us to see that our choices are often interdependent. It reveals that, for social change to work, we often have to coordinate our change with other people. Social norms theory allows us to better understand the nature of this interdependence.

THE WORKSHOP APPROACH

The manual provides training materials for a five-day residential workshop led by several main facilitators and resource persons. A participatory approach is used. Through small group discussions, case studies appropriate for each module, videos and role-play, the aim is to give trainees opportunities to analyse and reflect on what they are learning, and to compare, share and learn from their own experiences.

The workshop applies the Principles of Adult Learning, where adults learn more when they are actively involved in training activities that respond to their needs and interests, and can resolve concrete problems. They attach greater value to practical training than to lectures. Each module of the manual has been designed according to the Kolb Adult Experiential Approach to Learning, a four-stage cycle described in the Notes to Facilitators → **Module 0**, Step 5.

Each module comes with detailed procedures, exercises, presentations, handouts and Notes to Facilitators. Modules build on each other, but any module can be used in a standalone session, depending on the knowledge, experiences and needs of the audience. All modules should be tailored to the learning needs of participants and the context of the country in which they operate.

TARGET GROUPS

The training targets programme managers who have to address abandonment of harmful practices as part of collective social change, and have a variety of different educational and experiential backgrounds. It may be necessary to adapt unfamiliar concepts so that they become easily understandable and can readily be applied to programmes.

Examples of likely participants include FGM/c programme managers from UN organizations, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, faith-based organizations and government ministries. They will be selected based on commitment to the further training of community facilitators involved in FGM/c abandonment.

Ideally, to allow a dynamic interaction and exchange of experiences, the size of the workshop should be limited to no more than 32 participants. The methodology systematically implies four working groups of eight. To ensure the workshop has an impact, and to build committed teams of trained participants for each attending organization, it is best to invite two members of each organization, plus two collaborative partners fully involved in FGM/c abandonment.

PLANNING FOR THE WORKSHOP

To better plan the workshop, it is crucial to know the specific needs of the participants and their expectations in advance.

One month beforehand, a pre-questionnaire should be sent to participants which can be found in Section I of “Pre-Workshop Communication With Participants”. The results should help facilitators and resource persons to design and fine-tune the workshop plan. The pre-questionnaire provides basic insights into the capacities of participants, and encourages them to engage even before they arrive at the workshop, and to prepare to contribute once the workshop begins.

BEFORE AND AT THE WORKSHOP

Before the workshop, participants should review ↗ **Module 1, Handouts**, complete a handout on their national legal framework, please see Section III of “Pre-Workshop Communication With Participants” and reflect on social norms, the roles they play in maintaining cultural practices and the dynamics of change.

Participants also need to begin work on a draft project that will be developed during the workshop. They should send the organizers a brief draft outline 15 days in advance, see Section II of “Pre-Workshop Communication With Participants”.

At the workshop, participants will work on their individual draft projects during ↗ **Modules 1** and ↗ **4**, and in the evening. They should have the opportunity to interact with the facilitators and resource persons to discuss concepts, brainstorm on their projects and work on them individually.

By the end of the course, they should be able to better analyse their draft projects and related “problem statements,” and, if relevant, redesign them from a social norms perspective. They will present the final versions of each project to the group, and prepare an executive summary. The revised projects will in part serve as a mechanism to assess their learning and the course itself. Some participant projects will be selected as examples for distribution to field workers and community organizations, and used in future workshops.

For the workshop as a whole, participants need to regularly attend the sessions and dedicate time in the evenings to review readings and handouts, as the facilitators will regularly refer to these. Participants may also want to prepare questions, observations or counter-arguments to discuss in forthcoming sessions.

THE FACILITATION TEAM

Facilitators should be conversant with social norms and social change perspectives, and the human rights-based approach to development programming, and be experienced in FGM/C abandonment. They may be supported by resource persons with similar knowledge. The latter are meant to assist the discussion of case studies, clarify concepts and help improve individual draft projects.

It is hoped that this manual will enable many institutions to strengthen actions to accelerate the abandonment of FGM/C and other harmful practices rooted in gender discrimination.

OUTLINE OF MODULES AND WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

The manual provides a broad introduction to the topic of social norms and change, especially in relation to applying a social norms perspective to creating positive social change.

➤ **Module 0** offers an introduction to the workshop.

➤ **Module 1** explains what social norms are and how they affect human behaviour. Social norms are rules of behaviours for relevant populations. When a social norm exists, individuals see others conform to it. They feel a social obligation to conform, and believe they will be subject to a form of social punishment if they do not [BICCHIERI 2010](#). A case study in ➤ **Module 1, Handout 1.1**, “A Mother’s Story: Challenges Faced by Those Who Begin the Process of Change,” featuring the dilemma of a Sudanese mother vis-à-vis her young daughter and the community pressure to cut her, exemplifies this challenge. Khadija’s words — “If I don’t cut her there won’t be anyone to marry her. I wish I didn’t have daughters, because I am so worried about them” — are meant to resonate in workshop participants’ minds.

➤ **Module 2** introduces the concept of human rights “enjoyment” and the embodiment of rights in social norms. Rights enjoyment becomes a reality when the appropriate development processes transform human rights standards and principles into shared social norms [ACKERLY 2010](#). Laws alone are not sufficient when social norms involving fear of disrepute, family honour and prestige, and/or economic vulnerability push parents to marry their daughters at too young an age. Even if parents want to make a choice that benefits their daughters as much as their economic situation allows, the cumulative weight of economic vulnerability and powerful social norms make the very poor believe they have no choice [AMIN ET AL. 2005](#).

The role of the law in situations calling for social change is explored in ➤ **Module 3**. Laws are not only an indication of punishment in case of infraction. They can also be interpreted as reflecting the intentions of legislators and through them the public in gen-

eral. Laws may have an expressive function, where they make a statement as opposed to controlling behaviour directly. As a consequence, legal statements may be designed to change social norms [SUNSTEIN 1996](#).

➤ **Module 4** builds on the first three modules by mapping seven common patterns and transformative elements of the social dynamics of abandonment. Insights from social norms theory correspond with lessons learned from field experiences, and suggest that the seven patterns can help transform the social norm of cutting girls, and encourage accelerated abandonment. There is also evidence that motivating a small number of people to influence a larger number can generate spontaneous and natural scaling up, once a critical mass and tipping point are reached. ➤ **Module 4** provides practical tools and offers several powerful examples of change in different settings based on various strategies.

In ➤ **Module 5**, some elements of planning and measurement are highlighted, with the main topic being the use of surveys to measure social norms and programmes promoting positive social change. A simple diagram helps in distinguishing social norms within different types of social regularities (habits, conventions and norms), predicting collective behavioural problems and designing appropriate programme strategies.

➤ **Module 6** provides guidance for participants to organize and present their draft projects, and evaluate the workshop outcomes.

TENTATIVE AGENDA

The workshop agenda should reflect the participants' needs. The following timetable offers a general and adaptable approach.

DAY 1

AM **Module 0** — Workshop Introduction

Module 1 — “Dynamics of a Social Norm: Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting”

PM **Module 1** — continued

DAY 2

AM **Module 1** — continued

PM **Module 2** — “From Human Rights Principles to Shared Social Norms”

DAY 3

AM **Module 3** — “Effective Legislative Reforms in Situations Calling for Social Change”

PM **Module 4** — “Seven Common Patterns and Transformative Elements for Change”

DAY 4

AM **Module 4** — continued

PM **Module 5** — “Assessing for Planning and Measurement of Social Norms and Programmes Promoting Positive Social Changes”

DAY 5

AM **Module 5** — continued

Module 6 — “Putting It All Together” (including presentation of individual projects)

PM **Module 6** — continued

PRE-WORKSHOP COMMUNICATION WITH PARTICIPANTS

Pre-workshop communication with participants informs them about core requirements. Because of the nature of the training, which is innovative in many respects, advance preparation is necessary.

Participants are requested to complete a brief pre-workshop questionnaire, which can be found in Section I below and send it back to the workshop organizers at least two weeks in advance. The aim is to have a better understanding of their level of knowledge and use of a social norms perspective, their interest and expectations, and their hopes for the workshop.

The workshop will be adjusted based on what participants expect from the application of a social norms perspective to their own field experience, and specifically to programmes for the abandonment of FGM/c and/or other harmful practices.

In preparing for the workshop, participants are requested to develop a brief draft project based on their programme experience and practical challenges, as outlined in Section II. The project will be further developed and revised during the workshop. Further, before coming to the workshop, participants should complete a handout on their national legal framework, see Section III, and carefully study the handouts for [Module 1](#).

SECTION I — PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE

This pre-questionnaire aims at defining the specific needs of participants and their expectations from the workshop. It should be sent to each participant one month before the workshop.

- Name:
 - Organization:
 - Title:
1. What are your responsibilities in the programme/project you are working on?
 2. Have you already been involved in a programme using a human rights-based approach to development programming?
Are you familiar with concepts such as “rights-holders” and which rights they can claim, and “duty-bearers” and their obligations?
 3. Have you already been involved in a programme addressing collective behavioural changes? Addressing harmful practices? Fostering community empowerment?

4. Have you already applied a social norms perspective in designing and planning the programme you are responsible for?
5. What practical challenges are you encountering in achieving your programme objectives?
6. What strategies have you developed? Where have you seen progress? What are the obstacles?
7. What are your expectations from this workshop?
8. What concepts do you want to develop to increase your knowledge and understanding around the abandonment of harmful practices? What practical skills do you want to develop?
9. Can you describe an example of measurement you used in the past? How do you currently measure/monitor the project/programme you are responsible for? Can you provide an example of a set of indicators that could be used to monitor and evaluate your project/programme?

SECTION II — DRAFT PROJECT PREPARATION

At least two weeks before the workshop, participants should send an approximately three to four page draft project to the organizers. The project should be relevant to the main topic of the workshop: social norms and change, and FGM/c or other harmful practices.

The draft should describe a practical challenge and evaluate strategies for addressing it. It will be revised during the workshop using the theoretical and practical tools discussed there. On the last day, participants are expected to present their project and its revisions based on what they have learned. Below is a rough outline of what is expected:

10. Describe the challenge you are encountering in your project:
 - 10.1. Highlights of situation analysis, including cultural attitudes favouring harmful practices and their basic causes, and local cultural values that might favour positive social change and consistency with universal human rights principles.
 - 10.2. Specify overall long-term goals over one generation and mid-term objectives over a five-year term.
 - 10.3. Define target populations, including the characteristics of local groups and those covered by/involved in the project/programme, and a “basic unit” for project/programme implementation (families? communities characterized by shared values? social networks characterized by similar beliefs or shared values?).

11. Critical evaluation of your work so far:
 - 11.1. Main strategy/ies guiding the project/programme, and secondary strategies. Has a social norms perspective already been considered or implemented?

Have collective behavioural changes already been addressed?
 - 11.2. Compare the issue you are addressing with other issues you have worked on in the past.
12. Changes in practices:
 - 12.1. Describe at least one modified strategy for addressing your challenge that's been suggested by issues encountered in your field practice.
13. Assessing for planning and measurement:
 - 13.1. How do you measure project/programme results? How do you assess whether or not social norms are at play? Provide a set of indicators currently used to monitor and evaluate your project/programme.

SECTION III — COMPLETING A HANDOUT ON THE NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Before the workshop, complete “Describing the National Legal Framework In Which Actions to Promote FGM/C Abandonment Will Be Situated” ➔ **Module 3, Handout 3.1.**

Answer the following questions to describe the national legal framework (and when appropriate the “state” framework) in which actions to promote the abandonment of FGM/C will eventually be situated:

- A. Has your country ratified the:
 - A.1. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)?
 - A.2. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)?
 - A.3. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)?
 - A.4. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)?
 - A.5. African Charter on Human and People’s Rights?
 - A.6. African Charter on the Rights of the Child?
 - A.7. Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women?

- B. Does your country have a constitutional provision ensuring women's equal rights?
- C. Does the constitution say anything more explicit about FGM/C?
- D. Does a national reproductive health law condemn FGM/C?
- E. Is there a criminal law (included in the penal code) prohibiting FGM/C?
- F. If yes, has this law been enforced?
- G. Is there a criminal law prohibiting assault or abuse of minors?
- H. Is there a criminal law prohibiting violence against women?
- I. Has any judge ever issued an order preventing a girl from undergoing FGM/C? Or requiring an FGM/C practitioner to pay compensation to a girl upon whom FGM/C was performed?
- J. Are medical providers prohibited from performing FGM/C by specific regulations?
- K. Are there any child protection laws that allow state authorities to intervene for the abandonment of FGM/C?

Given the legal situation above, explain what lines of actions you would take in programme activities at the local level to use the existing legal environment or law provisions for accelerating FGM/C abandonment.

IV — READING

The reading "Norms in the Wild: how to diagnose, measure and change social norms", Chapter 1, "Diagnosing norms" [BICCHIERI 2014](#) should be sent to participants before the workshop. This reading is important for fully understanding the social norms perspective and related concepts.

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