Reducing Societal Discrimination Against Adolescent Girls: Using social norms\(^1\) to promote behavior change

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Executive Summary

This issue paper provides a critical review of the available evidence regarding how social norms can be used to promote behavior change and, in so doing, to reduce societal discrimination against adolescent girls in the developing world. The paper begins by providing a background on the social psychological literature relating to social norms and behavior change. Social norms are individuals’ perceptions about which attitudes and behaviors are typical (descriptive norms) or desirable (injunctive norms) in their community. Social norms affect behavior by interacting with an individual’s desire to conform and are therefore most likely to influence behavior when the community to which the norm pertains is important to the individual’s identity and when the norm is salient to an activity or decision. The social psychological literature indicates that the dispersal, or perceived uniformity, of a descriptive norm also affects its pull on behavior. The literature indicates that weakening negative descriptive norms and propagating prosocial but negatively framed injunctive norms are strategies likely to contribute to positive behavior change.

With this literature as a background, we examine three broad types of social norms interventions: social norms marketing campaigns, multi-faceted community interventions, and legal reform evaluated with respect to social norms. We identify large gaps in the literature due to methodological shortcomings in many of the studies available and emphasize the importance of quasi-experimental study design. However, we also identify some apparent program successes and put those achievements in the context of the social psychological literature in an effort to cull lessons learned. We highlight the potential for unintended consequences, particularly due to inadvertent propagation of negative descriptive norms. We also highlight the importance of targeting the correct audience effectively to bring about behavior change and establishing credibility to propagate prosocial norms.

We conclude by identifying areas of opportunity – the paucity of evidence as to the effectiveness of social norms interventions with respect to reducing discrimination against adolescent girls leaves wide open the arena for future studies to explore potential effects of programs. We offer three types of recommendations – methodological recommendations, substantive areas of need or particular promise, and considerations for individuals designing social norms interventions.

\(^1\) As discussed in further detail below, we use the social psychological definition of social norms, perceptions of what is done or of what should or should not be done in a given community.
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This issue paper, researched and written in the Summer and Fall of 2012 at the request of Girl Hub, a joint initiative between the Nike Foundation and the Department for International Development, aims to provide a critical evaluation of the evidence on how social norms can be used to promote behavior change and thereby reduce societal discrimination against adolescent girls. We define societal discrimination against adolescent girls as all differential, adverse treatment of girls relative to boys. We recognize that this includes not only programs and policies that directly result in disparate treatment of adolescent girls relative to their male peers, but also norms and institutions that have a disparate effect on females and affect the standing, educational attainment, independence, and treatment of adolescent girls. We define adolescence as ages 10-19, but grant that the age range is approximate and include programs targeting girls somewhat younger than 9 and women somewhat older than 19 where appropriate.

We begin by offering a series of definitions to lay the groundwork for our analysis in the review, as well as a background on the social psychological literature regarding social norms and behavior change. We then examine three types of social norms interventions (social norms marketing, multi-faceted community interventions, and legal reforms) and the most rigorous studies of each that we have identified. Finding the evidence sparse, in our conclusion we offer methodological suggestions for future studies, identify areas of promise and need in the field, and provide a framework of considerations for individuals designing social norms interventions.

I. Introduction and Methods

a. Definitions and an Introduction to Social Norms in the Social Psychological Literature

Many programs designed to reduce societal discrimination against adolescent girls focus on changing individual attitudes as a way to change behaviors, for example, reducing individual approval of female genital cutting/mutilation (FGC/M) or reducing individual acceptance of sexual harassment of girls in schools. Less frequently, such programs focus on, or include interventions targeting, social norms. The distinctions between these concepts are important and often overlooked, so we begin by establishing definitions that will guide the rest of our review.

As discussed in further detail below, we use the social psychological definition of social norms, perceptions of what is done or of what should or should not be done in a given community.
Norms are often defined as models or patterns, and societal norms are often defined as the customary rules that govern behavior in a given community (Geertz, 1973). By contrast, social norms are “individuals’ perceptions about which attitudes and behaviors are typical or desirable in their community” (Paluck and Ball, 2010; Cialdini and Trost, 1998). This definition is derived from an extensive social psychological literature focusing on social norms as “socially shared definitions of the way people do behave or should behave” (Paluck, 2007; Miller, Monin and Prentice, 2000). Social norms include both descriptive norms (perceptions about behaviors that are common in the community) and injunctive norms (perceptions about which behaviors are desirable in the community) (Prentice, 2008; Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren, 1990). Individual attitudes and beliefs can be distinguished from these community-oriented concepts of norms: attitudes are individuals’ “evaluative stance toward the self or something in the environment,” and beliefs include “understandings (thought of as factual) of the self or something in the environment” (Paluck and Ball, 2010).

It is worth noting that because social norms are perceptions, they may be incorrect. For example, an individual may believe that 95 percent of her community members cut their daughters, when in fact only 45 percent of community members do so. An incorrectly perceived social norm may still have a strong effect on individual behavior (Prentice and Miller 1993). For example, a woman who perceives that FGC/M is highly prevalent in her village may insist that her daughter be cut, contrary to her own opinion that FGC/M is wrong, even if FGC/M in the village is actually quite rare.

Social norms do not necessarily or always influence behavior. Of primary importance to a social norm’s effect on behavior is whether the social norm is defined with respect to a relevant community (Paluck and Shepherd 2012; Miller and Prentice 1996). For example, if an individual believes “girls in my country do not get married until they are 20,” this would only have a strong effect on behavior if the national community were particularly relevant to that individual. Often social norms affect behavior more dramatically when the norms relate to a community of essential importance to the individual decision-maker, such as a village, an ethnic group, or a religious group. It is precisely because a decision-maker values his or her membership in the relevant social group that social norms can affect behavior so powerfully – they interact with the individual’s desire to conform to the group in question (Cialdini and Trost, 1998; Cialdini, Kallgren, and Reno, 1991).

Social norms are also most likely to influence behavior when they are salient to the behavior in question. For example, if a father must decide whether to enroll his daughter in school on a given day, the strength of a social norm’s pull on his behavior will likely depend on whether an event or statement triggers him to think of that social norm on the day of enrollment and whether that norm is specifically relevant to the decision of whether to enroll his daughter in school. General norms about treating girls equally with boys may be less powerful because of their reduced salience with respect to enrolling kids in school, and norms that are perceived as out of date (many years ago, people in this community did not enroll girls in school) are also unlikely dramatically to affect behavior.
In addition, the dispersal of a norm often affects how powerfully it can influence behavior, such that a descriptive norm tending toward an extreme (5% of girls in this village attend school) may be more likely affect behavior that a negative descriptive norm that is less dire (in this village, 45% of girls attend school). A norm with a narrow dispersal (almost none of the girls attend school) is more likely to have a strong effect on behavior than a norm with a wider dispersal (a large number, though still a minority, of girls attend school in this village) (Prentice, 2008).

Multiple studies have shown that attitudinal change is insufficient to motivate behavior change—it is changing social norms, i.e. altering perceptions of community patterns or standards, that brings about behavior change most effectively (Paluck, 2009). Research indicates that prosocial descriptive norms (emphasizing the regularity of desired behavior or the non-uniformity of undesired behavior) and proscriptive injunctive norms (emphasizing that which ought not be done in the eyes of the community) are likely the most influential (Cialdini et al., 2006; Croy, Gerrans, and Speelman, 2010).

We define social norms interventions as programs that either intentionally or unintentionally alter or attempt to alter perceived community injunctive or descriptive norms as a means of bringing about behavior change. We analyze these programs within the context of the body of social psychological literature on social norms and behavior change.

b. Methods and Scope of Review

For this issue paper, we conducted searches of the scholarly and grey literatures. We searched scholarly databases for papers on girls and social norms, development, education, adverse treatment, and discrimination. We also searched collections of development publications and working papers available through the World Bank, Population Council, the Department for International Development, and USAID for the same terms as well as for projects on inheritance laws, harmful traditional practices (including FGC/M and early marriage), and any projects specifically focused on adolescent girls in the developing world. We then selected papers that used social norms as a lever for behavior change, explicitly or implicitly, and also pulled additional papers referenced in the bibliographies of those papers identified by our search terms. Finally, we used internet searches and visited the websites of programs mentioned in the selected papers in order to access any additional studies or evaluations publicly available.

From that larger sample, we selected programs for inclusion and discussion in this review that (1) directly target social norms as a lever for behavior change (either explicitly or implicitly, recognizing that many such interventions do not use the vocabulary of social norms); (2) focus on problems specific to adolescent girls; and, (3) have been subject to evaluations with at least enough rigor to allow us the opportunity to discuss the program’s potential effects and avenues of affecting behavior – usually through either quasi-experimental study design or pre- and post-intervention evaluations.
Our standards for rigor include control groups, randomization, surveys inquiring about combinations of attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and social norms, and efforts to triangulate survey data\(^3\) with other measures, such as school enrollment statistics. The universe of programs within the ambit of this study is small, largely because many interventions have not been subject to rigorous evaluation, the programs have not specifically been described in the available literature, or the results of studies have not been made available. We have therefore included some studies that only partially meet our standards for rigor. For example, some of the programs we discuss included only pre- and post-studies in intervention areas or only post-intervention studies in control and intervention areas. We exclude programs that do not offer any point of comparison, for example, programs that only are evaluated with a post-intervention study in the intervention area. Because almost all studies hurt for rigor, we combine understudied interventions with existing studies of behavior change and social norms in order to cull the available data for lessons learned and identify areas for improvement.\(^4\) In the matrix accompanying this issue paper, we also list a number of social norms interventions that either use social norms only peripherally or have been studied only minimally to give readers a sense of the wider universe of programs using social norms to reduce societal discrimination against adolescent girls.

Having described what is included in this issue paper, it is also important to note that which is outside the scope of this paper. Economic reforms, transfer programs, sports programming, and leadership initiatives may all affect social norms by changing the activities of community members and, if such changes are widely noticed, changing descriptive social norms. We omit such programs because our focus is on programs that specifically use the lever of social norms (perceptions) to change behaviors. In addition, this paper does not attempt to explain or explore the dynamics of macro-level societal and political change, an area of interest to many seeking to reduce societal discrimination but one beyond the scope of this paper.

We organize those programs using the lever of social norms to change behaviors included in this review into three main categories: social norms marketing programs, multi-faceted community interventions including discussion groups or community declarations, and legal reform (institutional change), which uses the law as a means of communicating community injunctive norms.

We believe there are significant gaps in the existing literature that leave open exciting opportunities for future research and social norms interventions to change behavior and reduce societal discrimination against adolescent girls. We outline these opportunities in our conclusion.

\(^3\) We note that survey data may refer to quantitative and/or qualitative results. Unfortunately, many qualitative studies include only the intervention area and are only conducted post-intervention. We discuss the importance of using rigorous quantitative and qualitative studies in our recommendations.

\(^4\) A small number of programs, such as the Positive Deviance Initiative, have been included in this review at the request of the Foundation, though strictly speaking the evaluations do not meet the criteria stated above. We note this shortcoming when discussing such programs and seek to use the theories of behavior change and social norms interventions to draw out lessons learned from those programs.
II. Social Norms Marketing Programs to Reduce Societal Discrimination Against Adolescent Girls

a. Overview

One well-known type of social norms intervention is social norms marketing. Social norms marketing interventions are those using “traditional marketing techniques to alter perceptions of descriptive and injunctive norms,” and include edutainment programs (targeted soap operas on radio or tv), billboard campaigns, newspaper and magazine advertisement campaigns, and other similar initiatives (Paluck and Ball, 2010). We have identified a limited number of interventions meeting our criteria for inclusion in this paper and discuss each of them below.

b. Soul Buddyz (South Africa)

“Soul Buddyz,” an edutainment program run by the Soul City non-governmental organization in South Africa, is specifically focused on adolescent boys and girls. Soul Buddyz includes a television program, a radio program, a “life skills booklet” designed for use in grade 7, and about 5,200 Soul Buddyz Clubs across South Africa, usually connected to a library or school (Soul City, 2008).

Major focuses of the Soul Buddyz program are HIV/AIDS prevention and reducing the stigma of the virus. In studies controlling for socioeconomic and other demographic factors, awareness of the means of virus transmission and decreased negative responses indicating decreased stigma were correlated with exposure to the Soul Buddyz programs (Soul City, 2008). Studies did not control for prior attitudes, a serious weakness given that adolescents who choose to watch the series are likely to be less prejudicial and have greater awareness of HIV/AIDS. Further, although promoting gender equity was among the goals of the program, most studies did not measure attitudes or social norms regarding gender equity with any rigor. One study found that Soul Buddyz club membership correlated with negative outcomes related to discrimination against adolescent girls, i.e., non-gender equitable views (such as, a girl must have sex with a boy who gives her a present) (Soul City, 2005). No publicly available studies rigorously analyze this negative outcome, but Cousins (2009) points out that the Soul Buddyz plotline perpetuates the idea of “boys as subjects and girls as objects of sexual desire.” This suggests that the narratives of Soul Buddyz inadvertently propagate negative descriptive norms, such as girls have sex to please their boyfriends regardless of their own desires.

c. Meena Communication Initiative (Southeast Asia)

The Meena Communication Initiative (MCI) is set of edutainment campaigns aimed at reducing discrimination against girls in Southeast Asia. Through a cartoon character name Meena, comic books and animated videos, MCI presents culturally grounded programs to propagate social norms regarding equal treatment of girls, sending girls to school, and early marriage. Since 1991, the series of comic books have been released and
films screened in public spaces in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, the Maldives, and Bhutan, and the comics have been incorporated into educational materials through the IDEAL program (McKee, Aghi, Carnegie and Shahzadi, 2003; Chesterton, 2003).

A study of MCI was commissioned too late to establish and survey control groups, but it nonetheless sufficiently randomized implementation of a household survey and focus groups over high-, medium-, and low-exposure groups to measure the impact of MCI (Chesterton, 2004). Some shifts in social norms and behavioral changes are well documented in post-viewing surveys for this and other studies (Pervez, 1997, e.g., cited in Chesterton, 2004). Viewers self-report increased awareness of differential treatment of girls and cite their own behavioral changes as a result of viewing. In one cartoon, Meena and her brother trade places for a day, he doing her chores and eating her smaller plates of food to show how girls need energy just as much as boys do. Viewers reported being more cognizant of giving girl children more food and having been previously unaware before of their discriminatory behavior.

Participants in the household survey report being aware of common Meena messages presented in the survey as injunctive social norms. The most recognized messages are that girls should be provided education and equal treatment, while messages concerning early marriage and the dowry system were not closely associated with Meena, even though some materials do touch on these topics. It remains unclear whether respondents translate Meena’s social norms into their own community’s social norms, highlighting the distinction between in Meena’s community, girls should be treated equally, versus in our community, girls should be treated equally. While this distinction is unimportant if respondents see Meena and her family as members of their community—and some evidence suggests that respondents do see her as part of their community and not just a cartoon character—the capacity to alter local social norms is unclear without a more direct question. The questionnaire did ask participants whether they wish to be like Meena, with a high proportion answering yes (93% in India, 70% in Pakistan and 25% in Bangladesh) (Chesterson 2004).

In summary, MCI has been successful in motivating small changes in reported behaviors regarding differential treatment of girls and knowledge of the social norms messaging Meena intends to put forth.

d. **Somos Diferentes Somos Iguales (Nicaragua)**

The “We are Different, We are Equal” (SDSI in Spanish) campaign, run by the organization Puntos de Encuentro in Nicaragua, is an edutainment initiative to alter social norms surrounding sexual abuse of children and dating violence among adolescents. The program employs social norms marketing through an edutainment television show (Sexto Sentido), a related radio show, a nightly youth call-in radio show, and a billboard campaign in 17 cities in Nicaragua. The program also includes youth leadership training with community leaders (Bank, Ellsburg, Espinoza, Pena, Pulerwitz, & Solorzano, 2008).
The slogan of the multi-media campaign from 2002-2005 was “we need to be able to talk,” seeking to present taboo subjects for open discussion, including child sexual abuse.

SDSI administered a survey annually from 2003-2005, including some qualitative interviews in three different cities with varying levels of exposure to programming. The surveys measured impact through the gender-equity scale (measuring individual attitudes regarding gender norms and relationship) and the power and control index (measuring self-reported behaviors within heterosexual relationships). Higher exposure to SDSI correlated with more frequent reports of awareness regarding help available to domestic violence survivors, higher perceived self-efficacy, and a greater likelihood of having spoken with someone about domestic violence in the prior six months (Bank et al., 2008). SDSI exposure also correlated with personal attitudes supporting gender equality, such as a lower likelihood of believing a woman who carries condoms is “easy.” However, higher exposure to SDSI also correlated with negative perceptions of the social context, which appears to indicate perceptions of social norms were negatively affected by exposure to SDSI. Insufficient detail was provided with respect to the social context measures, leaving us unable to conclude whether the social context measures in fact captured social norms (Paluck and Ball, 2010).

One possible explanation for the negative correlation between SDSI exposure and negative social context measures is that, in its effort to reduce stigma and propagate a positive injunctive social norm to encourage help-seeking behavior (people in this community should talk about sexual and child abuse), the SDSI campaign may have propagated the negative descriptive norm in this community, sexual and child abuse is highly prevalent. While awareness campaigns can reduce stigma and channel survivors into available services and support systems, SDSI highlights that they must be conducted with care to avoid propagating and further entrenching negative descriptive norms (Paluck and Ball, 2010; Ball Cooper, Paluck, and Fletcher, 2012).

e. Program H (Brazil)

Although many acknowledge that men and boys must be included in interventions to reduce discrimination against women, programs to reduce violence against adolescent girls with an explicit focus on men and boys are relatively rare. One such program is Program H, which has been implemented in Brazil and elsewhere. The program targets “young men,” aged 15-24 (http://www.promundo.org.br/en/activities/activities-posts/program-h-manuals-download/). The target age group is important and likely wise choice with respect to reducing dating violence against adolescent girls for two reasons: Brazilian men aged 20-24 are the most likely to report violence in their most recent relationship (Barker 2003), and adolescent girls are often are in relationships with older men (Luke and Kurz, 2002; Unicef, 2006).

Program H is a multi-faceted intervention promoting “gender-equitable behavior” through facilitated, peer-to-peer discussion groups covering gender-based violence and health, and a social norms marketing campaign including radio spots, billboards, and other marketing tools (Barker, 2003; Paluck and Ball, 2010). Program H has been
evaluated using a survey that measures attitudes and self-reported behaviors paired with a limited qualitative study, and weak evidence suggests that the program correlates with positive attitudinal change (Barker, Nascimento, Pulerwitz, and Segundo, 2006; Paluck and Ball, 2010). The survey is measured on a Gender Equitable Man (GEM) scale, a scale that has been validated against self-reported behaviors but not objective measures. Further, the survey questions appear vulnerable to biased responses toward gender-equitable answers, particularly among program participants sensitized to the program goals (Paluck and Ball, 2010). Understanding these caveats, the Program H evaluations did show lesser support for traditional gender norms over time and an increase in self-reported safer sex practices. Self-reported condom use was markedly increased in the intervention site that included the social norms marketing campaign (Barker et al., 2006).

Unfortunately, the survey instrument measures personal attitudes and self-reported behaviors but not social norms – despite the fact that the intervention is consistent with social norms theory. For example, the marketing campaign targets descriptive norms with messages such as *men in this community support gender-equitable behavior* and campaigns modeling such behavior. In one iteration, the program featured a famous rapper rejecting gender-based violence and *machismo*, weakening negative injunctive norms that such violence is permissible in the community (Paluck and Ball, 2010). While Program H presents some evidence supporting the effectiveness of the intervention of promoting gender-equitable attitudes and safer sex practices, and some evidence of the marginal impact of the social norms marketing campaign on safer sex practices in particular, it also reveals a gap in measuring program effects on social norms themselves. Questions asking participants to report on community behaviors and community norms, though still subject to bias, may be less dramatically affected by response bias than self-reported individual behaviors and therefore could be especially revealing.

**f. No Toilet, No Bride Campaign (India)**

The No Toilet, No Bride media campaign in India was a social infrastructure advertising campaign aimed at girls of marriageable age and those who might negotiate marriage proposals on their behalf. It was implemented in India in the northern state of Haryana in 2007. It consisted of billboards, painted walls, and posters urging potential brides to demand sanitation facilities as part of a marriage agreement, i.e., if a potential husband’s family refused to build a latrine, a girl should not marry into the family. In addition, families could request a government subsidy to build a latrine of about $48 US. The aim of the program was to reduce embarrassment associated with menstruation and health problems associated with sanitation issues for women in rural areas by encouraging families to build latrines.

The No Toilet, No Bride campaign was evaluated by Stopnitzky (2011) using a natural experiment arising from the sex ratio. The campaign effectively promoted the injunctive social norm that brides should demand sanitation facilities as part of a marriage negotiation. Stopnitzky shows that latrine building increased 11.2% over the entire state of Haryana and that even more latrines were built for new brides in areas where women and girls of marriageable age were relatively scarce and thus enjoyed greater bargaining
power. The campaign displays the positive effect that a social norms marketing campaign can have on sanitation and health facilities and highlights the potential for exploiting natural variation when pre- and post-intervention studies and control groups are not readily available. While we cannot and would not prescribe a stark gender imbalance to afford women greater bargaining power, other methods of increasing the bargaining power of girls and their advocates combined with social norms media campaigns may improve outcomes for girls. It is not clear whether the campaign contributed to broader shifts in married women’s bargaining power over the course of the marriage.

g. Conclusions

Social norms marketing campaigns, particularly edutainment initiatives, are powerful in their potential to reach a large audience at relatively low cost and effectively to deliver messages (Paluck and Ball 2010; Perse and Rubin 1989). However, social norms marketing campaigns run the risk of propagating negative descriptive norms and can have unintended negative consequences, as may have been the case with Soul Buddyz’s gender equity messages and SDSI’s emphasis on talking about sexual abuse. There is some evidence that Soul Buddyz HIV-related messages, Program H’s gender equity message, and MEENA’s pro-girl messages (especially those specifically tied to nutrition) have had positive effects on social norms and behaviors. The identification between the audience and the characters or messages in social norms marketing campaigns is essential, and individuals designing a social norms marketing intervention should begin with a theory of the discrimination they seek to reduce, using that theory to identify an audience whose behavior they aim to change, and then carefully tailoring the marketing campaign to reach and be salient to that audience.

The combination of positive descriptive norms with negative injunctive norms is likely to be effective in changing attitudes and behaviors (Cialdini et al., 2006; Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Girskevicius, 2007). While Soul Buddyz effectively promulgated such norms with respect to its HIV-related messages (“people in this community use protection” and “people in this community should not discriminate against HIV positive individuals”), the gender-equity messages were not as well received. We highlight Program H as a stronger model for simultaneously breaking down negative norms of male dominance and replacing them with gender-equitable norms (Paluck and Ball, 2010).

Social norms marketing programs also may increase help-seeking behavior by propagating norms related to discussing negative behaviors, as in SDSI. We advise caution to avoid propagating negative norms, but if such programs channel individuals directly into resources for help, such as by displaying a hotline on a television screen, they can provide options for individuals to seek recourse if they have suffered due to societal discrimination while simultaneously reducing the stigma of doing so (Paluck and Ball, 2010).
III. Multi-Faceted Social Norms Interventions Targeting Social Norms Through Discussion Groups, Committees, and Community Declarations

a. Overview

Group-based activities, discussion groups, and community meetings are potential vehicles for the propagation of social norms without traditional marketing techniques. Although multi-faceted interventions may include social norms marketing (such as Program H, discussed above), we use this section to analyze multi-faceted social norms interventions that do not utilize marketing techniques or used them only peripherally.

b. Tostan (Senegal)

For almost twenty years, the NGO Tostan has conducted educational modules for women in villages in the Kolda region of Senegal on problem solving, health, human rights, and hygiene. These programs exemplify the multi-faceted approach of social norms interventions. Women participating in the program were encouraged to discuss FGC/M and early marriage, and to share those conversations with a buddy in a neighboring village and their own communities. Public declarations to abandon FGC/M arose out of community discussion and local committees were formed to ensure community compliance. Radio programs reportedly ran simultaneously with the program but descriptions of what those programs entailed are not publicly available.

The intervention villages were either selected by Tostan or included by request of the village, but all villages receiving the module were required to commit to financial support of the facilitator and to providing an audience. Some individuals also reported that communities were required to commit to abandoning FGC/M before the program could begin, though others denied that this was a pre-condition (Diop, Moreau, and Benga 2008). It is worth noting that FGC/M prevalence rates in intervention villages were dramatically lower than in other villages (64% in intervention villages compared to 87% in control villages) (UNICEF, 2008).

Tostan has been rigorously evaluated with quantitative baseline studies, quantitative immediate post-intervention studies, and both quantitative and qualitative studies conducted two years post-intervention (Diop, Mbacke, Moreau, Cabral Cissé, Mané, Baumgarten, and Melching, 2004; Diop, Amadou, and Benga, 2008; Unicef 2008). The studies included efforts to compare intervention villages to demographically similar “control” villages. The outcomes measured included behaviors, perceived social norms, and awareness of the law prohibiting FGC/M. Parents were asked whether they intended to cut their uncut daughters ages 0-10, about their personal attitudes toward FGC/M, and about perceived approval of FGC/M by specific community leaders, awareness of the law prohibiting FGC/M, awareness and perceptions of community declarations, and awareness of health effects of early marriage. Studies also measured community outcomes such as average age at first marriage and rates of marriage for girls under 15 and under 18.
In control, exposure, and intervention villages, personal attitudes on FGC/M and reported intentions (whether daughters would be cut) improved, (meaning attitudes were less favorable to the practice), but the change was much more dramatic in communities that received the intervention. The quantitative studies did not appear to ask about social norms. However, in the qualitative study, many informants reported that the public declarations had effects on community compliance – i.e., that the act of publicly committing to abandoning FGC/M gained village notoriety and served as a source of pressure to abandon the practice. However, the sample size in the qualitative study was small, and the data was not reported in a fashion that allows us to understand how many people reported the effect of the public declaration in their open-ended responses.

Studies also find that, in the intervention villages, marriages of girls under age 15 decreased but marriages of girls under 18 remained steady. The intervention communities reported a lower average ideal age for marriage at baseline—15 years—and more extensive latent opposition to FGC/M than non-intervention communities (UNICEF 2008; Diop et al. 2008). The public declarations focused on FGC/M rather than early marriage, so it is possible that this led to less effective messaging with respect to early marriage as compared to FGC/M. In addition, the curriculum module focused on the negative health effects of extremely early marriage, which we would expect to be more effective in reducing extremely early marriage than in reducing marriage of girls in late adolescence. This is consistent with the fact that many respondents in the qualitative study indicated that Tostan had motivated their prosocial attitudinal changes and that information about health effects of FGC/M and early marriage had been particularly influential (Diop et al. 2008). However, the utility of this qualitative study is limited because the lengthier interviews were conducted only in intervention sites, so there is no point of comparison to insure that the increased knowledge of negative health effects results from the Tostan intervention rather than some other wider change.

c. **FGM-Free Village Project (Egypt)**

In Egypt, an “FGM-Free Village” project began in 2004, was scaled up in 2008 to include 60 additional villages (twice the number of villages initially included) and was subject to a mid-term evaluation published in 2011. In 2008, FGC/M was also criminalized in Egypt. The program included work toward public declarations at the village level opposing FGC/M (though such declarations had been made in only 8 of 60 villages at the time of the mid-term evaluation), using UN Volunteers as awareness-raising field workers, focusing on opinion leaders such as medical professionals, lawyers, the media, and ministries, and a communications campaign including television, radio, billboards, and theater. Unfortunately, from the study, it is not clear to which activities control groups were exposed, though it appears that both control and intervention groups were exposed to at least the television campaign (Barsoum, Rifaat, El-Gibaly, Elwan, and Forcier, 2011).

The control and intervention villages were selected due to similarities in demographics and also in the median age of ever-married women and rates of FGC/M among girls 6-14 (96% in both), though rates of FGC/M among girls ages 10-15 were 77% in the
intervention villages and 84% in control villages. A quantitative study was conducted in 2006, which included six control and twelve intervention villages. This was followed by a qualitative study the following year with focus groups in seven villages (presumably all intervention villages) and targeted interviews with professionals.

According to the mid-term evaluation, 78% of women surveyed in intervention villages “retained” information about the negative health consequences of FGC/M (though it is not clear how information retention was defined or measured), and the same percentage of women in intervention villages said that the information they learned convinced them not to have their daughters cut. While only 27% of women in intervention villages believed the practice should continue, 77% of women in control villages said that it should continue.

In addition to measuring individual attitudes and intended behaviors, the mid-term evaluation also measured descriptive social norms. The study found that individuals in control sites were much more likely to perceive the negative descriptive norm that everyone in this community practices FGC/M, with 92% of respondents in control villages agreeing with that statement and only 45% of respondents in intervention villages agreeing. Young women in intervention communities were also more likely to know of uncircumcised married women. Further, individuals in intervention communities were much less likely to believe that opinion shapers (medical, media, and legal professionals along with community leaders and imams) supported the practice than individuals in control communities. Interestingly, in all surveyed communities, teachers were widely perceived to continue to support the practice.

Unfortunately, this study does not compare pre- and post-intervention data sets in the various communities, and so its ability to accurately to assess changes in attitudes, social norms, and intended behaviors is limited and particularly vulnerable to response bias. Further, the study does not compare villages in which public declarations took place with those in which such declarations did not take place. The social psychological literature would lead us to believe the public declarations could contribute significantly to propagating a prosocial community injunctive norm that in the community making the declaration, FGC/M should not continue.

d. Berhane Hewan (Ethiopia)

Berhane Hewan is a project to reduce early marriage in Ethiopia implemented between 2004 and 2006. It has been evaluated through a baseline study and post-intervention study comparing a control village and an intervention village. The intervention consisted of girls’ groups led by adult female mentors, encouragement and economic incentives to remain in school, nonformal education (including literacy and life skills training), and “community conversations” with five groups covering topics including early marriage. Married and unmarried girls aged 10-19 were separated into different girls’ groups, all with the focus of encouraging girls to pursue their education. The community conversations appear to have included adults only and led to decisions not to marry daughters “early” (it is unclear how early) and not to cut their daughters. Individuals
present for the discussion groups were then encouraged to reach out to other community members and convince them to make the same resolution. Reports vary as to whether economic incentives were provided to participating communities or certain participants, although individuals in the girls’ groups did receive support for educational expenses (Erulkhar and Muthengi, 2009).

The study measured both attitudes and behaviors. At baseline, 11% of girls in the intervention village expressed a desire to be married before age 18 (compared to 5% of girls in the control village), whereas at endline “only 3% of girls said they wanted to be married by this age” (Erulkar and Muthengi, 2009, p. 11). At baseline, rates of marriages for girls ages 10-14 were similar in the two villages; at endline the number of girls ages 10-14 included in the study who were married in the last two years in the intervention village was 0 whereas in the control village the figure was 5%. Thus, the intervention correlates with a decrease in marriages of girls ages 10-14.

However, the percentage of girls ages 15-19 who had ever been married in the intervention group remained steady from baseline to endline, indicating that marriages amongst girls ages 15-19 likely increased. It appears that marriages of girls ages 10-14 were simply delayed to later adolescence despite Ethiopian law’s prohibition of marriage under age 18. Such a delay likely represents a significant victory, as health consequences for childbirth under age 16 are worse than for girls in older adolescence and delayed marriage likely contributes to additional schooling, though those results are unconfirmed. This study highlights the need for further studies specifically examining the balance of power and health effects of marriages in later adolescence. It is unclear if measures of well being are still low for girls married in later adolescence compared to adult marriages.

One weakness of this study is that it does not measure social norms, so it is unclear if this delay in marriages is correlated with changing social norms (i.e., new perceptions in the intervention villages that most girls wait until after age 15 to marry or perceptions that girls in that village should wait until after age 15 to marry). Further, there was no follow-up to confirm whether additional community members resolved to abandon “early” marriage, whether community members agreed on what constitutes “early” marriage, and whether the resolutions were widely known within the community and perpetuated new injunctive and/or descriptive norms with respect to early marriage.

e. “Positive Deviance” (Anti-Human Trafficking Program, Indonesia)

The “positive deviance initiative” (PDI) focuses on highlighting the actions of community members perceived as extraordinary “whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers.” This runs contrary to social norms interventions because of its emphasis on what is exceptional rather than what is normative (www.positivedeviance.org), though highlighting atypical behaviors likely weakens negative descriptive norms.
In one project, PDI applied positive deviance theory with the goal of reducing sex trafficking of girls in Indonesian villages. While meeting as a group, community members were asked to identify problems (of which sex trafficking was deemed most pressing) and then to identify what a positive deviant would be in that context (“a poor family who has refused to send their daughters out to work in the sex industry,”) and then to identify “positive deviants” in the community (Dura and Singhal, 2008, pp. 11-12). Groups later engaged in community mapping exercises, identifying the number of homes “missing” girls in the community and those homes where families had avoiding trafficking. While this highlighted the negative descriptive norm that trafficking of girls from the village was common, that descriptive norm was weakened by the component of the exercise that focused on families from which girls were not missing.

Interviews with community members led to the establishment of “Community Watch Committees” consisting of volunteers to monitor traffickers and encourage at-risk families to understand the risks of migration. The development of a community designed and staffed intervention squad likely communicated the positive injunctive norm in this community, girls should not be trafficked.

The initiative has been evaluated through a qualitative study that appears to have been conducted in two villages in which the intervention took place. This evaluation does not meet the standard for criteria in this review due to its failure to provide any point of comparison with either pre-intervention interviews or a control site. However, it is included at the request of the funder. The study found that two years after the PDI implementation in one village, no new girls had been trafficked out of the village and 20 interventions had successfully been staged to avoid trafficking of at-risk girls (Dura and Singhal, 2008). The study was based on “two dozen” interviews in the field (apparently in two villages where the intervention took place), “participatory sketching,” and review of available program documents. The study did not survey or include any discussion of control groups or similar communities, concurrent trafficking patterns in Indonesia, or local economic trends, and research suggests that there was significant economic growth in the community during this time period (Dura and Singhal, 2008). As such, the program offers potentially effective components from the perspective of social norms theory, but we cannot assert with confidence that the program in fact was effective or program implementation directly led to the positive results observed.

\[f. \text{ Choices (Nepal)}\]

The “Choices” program in Nepal, targeting adolescent girls and boys aged 10-14, provides a promising model for promoting gender equity through multi-faceted interventions. A carefully studied child club program, Choices consistently revealed a trend toward gender equitable attitudes and behaviors in the treatment communities. The study also revealed the potential of social norms interventions. Choices combines facilitated discussion groups with a curriculum module employing multi-faceted interventions (drafting an advice column, creating a “bond of protection” in some cases, participating in exercises such as the “invisible wall” designed to highlight ways in which
perceptions influence behavior, and being assigned “colors” denoting inequality in group activities) in an effort to improve gender equity (Institute for Reproductive Health, 2011).

The program was evaluated in a pre-post, quasi-experimental study that included twenty-four child clubs (twelve control and twelve intervention) and a total of 603 children. Control and intervention villages were demographically similar and there were no significant differences in reported attitudes or behaviors at baseline. Only the intervention communities received the Choices curriculum intervention, and facilitators in those communities were selected among recent graduates of the child clubs and were trained prior to implementation.

The study included a quantitative interview with all children at baseline and at endline (one month after the conclusion of the curriculum). At endline, a randomly selected group of children also participated in qualitative interviews and a “photo voice” exercise in which the children submitted photographs of community behaviors. Finally, at endline, parents from control and intervention communities were randomly invited to participate in focus groups to evaluate the program.

Respondents showed statistically significant changes toward more gender equitable attitudes and self-reported behaviors in the intervention, but not control, communities. In addition, both boys and girls reported an improved distribution of household labor between brothers and sisters in intervention communities.

Although the study focuses primarily on measurements of attitudes and behaviors, it also illustrates the potential effect of social norms. One popular activity among participating children was the “Invisible Wall” exercise, in which participants were encouraged to discuss external barriers (such as community injunctive and descriptive norms) that prevented them from acting in gender equitable fashions. In the qualitative study, boy participants in the intervention group expressed the importance of education and equality when considering a future spouse; the same boys reported that they believed their parents hoped they would marry a spouse more likely to fit inequitable gender roles. Children from the experimental villages were also more likely than their peers in the control communities to describe changing descriptive norms (“Before, brothers never helped. Now, after education, the habit is slowly emerging.”) (Institute for Reproductive Health, 2011, p. 27).

While further post-intervention study is needed to determine the lasting effects of such a program, Choices represents a thorough and rigorously studied evaluation of a multi-faceted intervention using social norms as a lever for behavioral change.

**g. Conclusions**

The multi-faceted community interventions included in this review aim to propagate prosocial injunctive norms and weaken negative descriptive norms by highlighting the prosocial actions of certain community members. Both approaches are recommended by the social psychological literature as approaches likely to contribute to behavior change.
Multi-faceted interventions also allow opportunities to test the marginal effects of various components of the intervention by using a quasi-experimental approach and having different intervention villages receive different levels of intervention. For example, one community may have no intervention, another discussion groups, another discussion groups with material support, and another discussion groups, material support, and public declarations. Such layered interventions, paired with robust quantitative and qualitative pre-post studies would offer insight into the marginal effects of program components that could inform future program design.

Public declarations, such as those resulting from the Tostan and FGM-Free Villages projects, likely propagated prosocial injunctive social norms *(in this community, people should not cut their daughters)*. The strength of these declarations likely derives in part from their formation through a participatory process and perception as true community commitments rather than isolated statements by leaders (Unicef, 2008; Diop et al., 2008). Further, by including close-by communities with whose members marriage by intervention community members was common, the declaration may have encouraged “collective abandonment,” altering not only perceptions of the prevalence of FGC/M but also changing the marriage market (Mackie and LeJeune, 2009).

By highlighting the actions of extraordinary community members, PDI may also be weakening the negative descriptive norm *(poor people in this community have daughters who are trafficked)* by increasing the dispersal of the descriptive norm. Weakening a negative descriptive norm is often the best approach in a community where a program cannot credibly propagate a positive descriptive norm (Paluck and Ball, 2010). For example, in a community where trafficking of young girls is in fact common, a program cannot credibly propagate a positive descriptive norm *(very few girls in this village are trafficked)* but could weaken the negative descriptive norm by increasing the dispersal of the negative descriptive norm (decreasing perceived uniformity by propagating the credible descriptive norm that *45 percent of poor people in this village have daughters who are trafficked*).

Like the community-based nature of public declarations, PDI’s asset-based approach, focusing on the positive elements within a community, also establishes the credibility of the intervention, and the persuasiveness of the norms propagated, by focusing on the local origins of the solutions. This likely helps community members emotionally to connect with the multi-faceted community interventions in much the same way that audiences emotionally connect with characters on well-designed edutainment programs.

**IV. Legal Reform as a Social Norms Intervention**

When laws are in place that prohibit discrimination generally and/or prohibit specific practices that have an adverse impact on girls, the law itself expresses an injunctive norm: *people in this community should not discriminate against girls*. However, the community at play in the expression of an injunctive norm through legislation is likely a national community, which may be too heterogeneous inspire individuals to conform. On
the other hand, legal standards (prescriptions) may also change descriptive norms: if girls are required to attend school, individuals may believe that most girls in fact attend school.

As a result, legal reform can function at least in part as a social norms intervention if the reform alters perceptions of community behaviors or values. However, legal reform differs from other interventions described in this review in its generally national scope and the many other purposes legal reform serves. We include legal reform in this review at the specific request of the funder. Evaluations of legal reform meeting our criteria for inclusion in this study are exceedingly rare, particularly in the developing world. We searched scholarly databases and the grey literature for studies regarding the effect of legal reform on societal discrimination of adolescent girls. As discussed below, we found a few studies linking gender-neutral inheritance laws and compulsory schooling laws to increased equitable behavior toward adolescent girls in related spheres. However, the effect of criminalizing discriminatory practices remains unclear and evidence of the effectiveness and accessibility of legal recourse for adolescent girls remains anecdotal. We highlight these areas as potential areas for future study to fill this gap in the literature.

\textit{a. Prescribing Equitable Behavior: Inheritance Laws and Compulsory Schooling}

One avenue for legal reform is to focus on laws stating a prosocial and positively framed injunctive norm: *people in this community should divide their land equally among sons and daughters*. Where gender-equitable behavior is required by law and visible, it may encourage gender-equitable behavior in other realms and propagate gender-equitable social norms such as, *people in this community educate girls and boys equally*.

Inheritance law is an area with the potential to benefit adolescent girls, though most studies of inheritance law focus on adult widows rather than adolescent girls. There is some evidence that allowing widows to inherit their deceased husbands’ assets increases investments in children’s health, nutrition, and education, but available studies do not specify the division of that investment by the children’s sex (Quisumbing and Maluccio, 2003; Smith et al., 2003). Other work has shown that when women control resources, they are more likely to invest in female children, reducing discrimination against girls, but this may be highly dependent on local context (see, for example, Antman, 2010 and Qian, 2005). In contrast, inheritance, though a form of asset control, does not necessarily translate to changes in consumption patterns, which would be necessary to ameliorate adverse treatment of girls (Cooper and Bird, 2012). The wider impacts of inheritance and disinheritance are understudied and “remain largely intuitive” and anecdotal (Cooper and Bird, 2012, p. 528).

However, one study shows a direct link between gender-equitable inheritance laws and other gender-equitable outcomes. The 1994 Hindu Succession Act included reform of inheritance laws requiring families to grant equal shares to girl children, which lead to increased educational attainment for girls and increased average age of marriage in and the Indian states of Maharastra and Karnataka (Deininger, Goyal, and Nagarajan, 2010). This study provides some support for the proposition that legal prescriptions of gender-
equitable behavior can effectively decrease societal discrimination against adolescent girls in at least some contexts.

Similarly, compulsory schooling laws have been shown to increase years of education, and are particularly effective at keeping girls in school in areas where female educational attainment is low. In China, the 1986 Compulsory Schooling Law was implemented in combination with the ability of local officials to tax in order to build schools. The result was a significant increase in years of schooling attainment for girls relative to boys, even though the program did not specifically target girls (Fang, Eggleston, Rizzo, Rozelle and Zeckhauser, 2012). Compulsory schooling laws in countries where the national community is a salient member group or the norm is made more salient through local participation, may affect injunctive norms, leading parents to believe that in this community (or country), all children should go to school, regardless of gender. Allowing localized enforcement mechanisms, such as the local officials’ taxing authority in the Chinese example, may help local communities to assume ownership of the normative command of the law, propagating a prosocial injunctive norm in this community, parents should not keep any of their children out of school.

It is noteworthy that legal prescriptions of this nature show promise, as social norms theory would predict negatively phrased injunctive norms (proscriptions) would be most likely to motivate behavior change. Future research could explore the means by which such prescriptions are affecting behavior and the uniformity of their success in order to better inform future legal reform efforts to reduce societal discrimination against adolescent girls.

b. Criminalizing Discrimination and Offering Civil Legal Recourse

Criminalizing practices that adversely affect adolescent girls may make strong statements of the prosocial injunctive norm, such as in this country, girls should not be forced into marriage. However, laws prohibiting FGC/M and child marriage have not clearly correlated with drops in the practices. The apparently disappointing results of legal reform in this sphere may be due to lack of knowledge about the laws, lack of publication or enforcement of the laws, invisibility of the practices, and/or failure to buttress the legal change with other efforts to reduce harmful practices (Pathfinder International, 2006). In addition, criminal prohibitions may drive the practices underground, limiting protections available to adolescent girls affected by the practice without substantially reducing the practice itself, as one study describes the effect of the prohibition of child marriage in Kyrgyzstan (Ilibezova and Kinderbaeva, 2012).

Though criminalization potentially makes a strong statement about a practice’s unacceptability, laws that punish the girl’s family run the risk of discouraging her from reporting the crime and possibly even seeking help – so balance is a central challenge when such provisions are under consideration. Further, a certain level of institutional infrastructure is required for a prohibition to be practically significant. Even where the law prohibits child marriage, the lack of birth certificates or identity cards may reduce the enforceability of the law by allowing parents to lie about a girl’s age. For legal
proscriptions to be effective, there must exist sufficient legal infrastructure to allow for enforcement, population buy-in and awareness, and access to assistance for girls who have been victimized.

Legal reform can be especially significant in ensuring that adolescent girls who have experienced discrimination have recourse, such as divorce or annulment provisions for girls forced into unlawful early marriages. Anecdotally, laws allowing for swift divorce or annulments (including provisions exempting girls from dowry repayment requirements) may facilitate girls exiting forced or abusive marriages (Equality Now Adolescent Girls’ Legal Defense Fund, 2012).

c. Conclusions

The potential effects of legal reforms on reducing societal discrimination against adolescent girls through altering social norms are understudied. It is surprising, in light of the social psychological literature regarding social norms and behavior change, that evidence indicates prescriptive legal reform can be particularly influential in motivating behavior change. Further research is warranted to determine whether the studies in China and India with respect to compulsory schooling and inheritance laws respectively represent anomalies or are representative of a broader pattern. There is also insufficient evidence about the circumstances in which, and the mechanisms through which, proscriptive legal reform might effectively reduce discrimination against adolescent girls.

V. Opportunities and Recommendations

The programs included in this review highlight the potential of social norms marketing and other community-based social norms interventions to reduce societal discrimination against adolescent girls by changing behaviors affects girls’ well being. When placed in the appropriate cultural context, social norms interventions can be implemented with care and an eye towards opening alternatives to discrimination and harmful practices. Our ability to make specific programmatic recommendations is limited by the dearth of data on social norms interventions to reduce societal discrimination against adolescent girls. We therefore begin with recommendations on ways to improve that data, and then provide a set of areas that we think are especially fruitful avenues for future research, or might provide the largest gains to girls from improved methodological practice. Lastly, we provide some general guidance with the goal of helping those designing social norms interventions to ask the questions most likely to contribute to effective programming.

a. Methodological Recommendations

We recommend the following research components to improve future studies on social norms interventions to reduce societal discrimination against adolescent girls. Though some recommendations (such as those related to statistical methods) are solely focused on quantitative methods, most of the below apply to both quantitative and qualitative analysis:
• Evaluations of social norms interventions should include experimental or quasi-experimental study design. Varying the intensity of interventions in demographically similar and randomly selected communities, such as including complete control groups as well as high, medium, and low interventions and examination of spillover effects, can offer opportunities to understand causal effects.

• Baseline and post-intervention studies are summarily important, and should include questions measuring individual attitudes, individual behaviors, and individuals’ perceptions of injunctive and descriptive norms in their own communities. Ideally, both pre- and post-intervention studies should allow for open-ended responses to some questions to provide insight not revealed in strictly quantitative surveys.

• Statistical methods that take advantage of “natural experiments” where intervention intensity varies naturally due to outside factors, or the intervention was not sufficiently randomized over similar groups, hold great potential for implementing and identifying effects of social norms interventions.

• To the maximum extent possible, pre- and post-intervention studies should track the same randomly selected participants. Such tracking would allow researchers to assess the selection bias for edutainment programs in particular, i.e., noting whether individuals with exposure to the program are only those who previously expressed “positive” survey responses.

• Studies should provide the necessary context, considering the potential effects of local and national legal reforms, economic development, and other macro and micro level changes in order to assess the interactive effects of programs and other trends. Without such considerations, researchers run the risk of falsely identifying positive or negative effects. Results from studies of interactive effects would also allow program designers to contemplate the ideal timing for social norms interventions relative to other changes.

b. Areas of Need/Areas of Particular Promise for Social Norms Interventions

Just as there are specific methodological needs for rigorous analysis of program effectiveness, we conclude the following types of interventions offer opportunities for further research as to the effects of such programs on social norms and behavior change:

• Multi-faceted community interventions – programs including a variety of interventions using social norms as levers for behavior change and potentially other levers (such as resource transfers) have potential to motivate behavior change. These programs also offer exciting research opportunities, as different communities can receive different layers of the intervention, allowing for a comparison among intervention (and true control) villages to determine the marginal impact of various program components.

• Cash or resource transfers accompanied by educational initiatives on gender-equitable behavior may encourage the propagation of non-discriminatory social norms but have not typically been studied with an eye toward the effects of such transfers on perceived community injunctive and/or descriptive norms.
• Proscriptive and prescriptive legal reforms’ effects on social norms and behavior, and the roles played by enforcement and promotion of the new laws, are an understudied area of intervention and present an interesting puzzle as to the effects of prescriptive legal reforms that appear contrary to the predictions of social psychological theory.

• Programs focused specifically on adolescent girls, such as sports and leadership programs, are not usually evaluated in terms of their effects on social norms despite their potential to alter both descriptive and injunctive norms through changing girls’ roles in their communities and changing others’ perceptions of those roles.

c. Recommended Considerations for those Designing Social Norms Interventions

Though our ability to identify particular best practices is limited by the dearth of evidence, through combining the existing studies with the social psychological literature regarding social norms and behavior change, we have been able to cull some lessons we believe are valuable. We recommend that those designing interventions:

• Focus on specific forms of societal discrimination against adolescent girls, so as to target social norms salient to that particular behavior (rather than promoting a more generic pro-girl message).

• Develop a theory of that form of societal discrimination in the target community: why does the discrimination happen, who propagates it, and what allows it to persist? The answers to these questions will allow those designing interventions to consider their ideal audience whose behavior change is most likely to yield positive results.

• Cater the intervention to that audience whose behavior change is most likely to yield positive results. Use means (radio, television, billboards) likely to reach that audience and employ characters or messages likely to be seen as credible and accepted by that audience.

• Credibly propagate prosocial descriptive and injunctive social norms. Where societal discrimination is rampant, it is impossible credibly to propagate a prosocial descriptive norm. Instead, we recommend program designers seek to weaken the negative descriptive norm by attacking its dispersal where possible, i.e., highlighting the community members not engaging in the discriminatory behavior. Simultaneously, programs should seek to propagate prosocial injunctive norms, usually phrased in the negative (in this community, people should not keep their daughters out of school).

• If the goal of the program is to encourage individuals who suffer discrimination to seek recourse, use caution to avoid further entrenching the negative descriptive norm through an awareness campaign. Focus on channeling affected individuals directly into available recourse and propagating the prosocial descriptive norm that girls who suffer discrimination in this community seek help. Highlight the help-seeking behaviors more prominently than the discriminatory behavior at the root of the problem.
Unfortunately, the evidence available as to the effectiveness social norms interventions in reducing societal discrimination against adolescent girls is sparse. This paucity of evidence leaves many gaps in the literature, in turn opening many opportunities to future research and interventions to improve outcomes for adolescent girls.


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