



Norms Shifting

CUTTING EDGE INNOVATIONS IN HEALTH,
EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

Towards Achieving the SDGs

NOTES AND INSIGHTS

Shehu Yar'adua Centre, Abuja
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Highlights from Day 1 2023 Social Norms Conference

Special remarks: On Culture, Religion and Norms, Rev. Ozumba Emmanuel and Sheikh M. Nuruddeen Lemu

1. There is a delicate intersection between, cultural customs, religious practices and social norms.
2. Societies are fluid and change over time. Social norms considered to be positive to the growth of the society at a time must be evaluated and where necessary advocated for change.
3. Religion promotes and enhances cultural practices that result in the collective good for a society
4. Dialogue with the right religious stakeholders (knowledge experts) is important in shifting negative norms.

Keynote address: From Tradition to Transformation: Sociocultural Normative Shifts for Catalyzing Development Progress, Dr Amina Mohammed Baloni

1. Social norms differ across different cultures and societies.
2. It is important to understand why some norms exist. Having a good understanding of these norms is crucial implementing effective norms shifting programs.
3. Social customs and behaviour play a crucial role in ensuring the global objective that on one is left behind in health, education and gender equality
4. Understanding the intricate interplay of sociocultural norms paves way for inclusive societal development
5. Shifting societal norms is complex and requires collective action through: cross-cultural dialogue and community advocacy, sharing inspirational stories through media collaboration, integrating norms shifting into educational curricula, equipping societies with the necessary tools and resources to complement negative norms shifts and instituting policies that recognize and reward individual and communal efforts of negative norms shifts.

Panel 1: Moving the Needle: A Conversation on Effective Implementation of Programs that Integrate Social & Gender Norms Interventions

1. There is a need to design programs that take social norms into cognizance.
2. It is important to identify all stakeholders and involve them while developing and implementing programs.
3. To effectively address and curb pushbacks, implementers should identify key influential persons at grassroot and community levels and influence them positively to accept intervention at the conceptual program design stages.

Scientific Session 1a: Uncovering social norms and why they matter: What does the data say?

1. Leveraging positive social norms to drive changes has proven effective.
2. Collaboration between the public and private sector in the sharing and utilization of data is very crucial when developing policies that inform development outcomes which are influenced by social norms.
3. Technology should be incorporated into healthcare service delivery.

Scientific Session 1b: Exploratory research for women's health and wealth

1. Shared challenges encountered such as fear of mistakes, discomfort from needles/injections, and overall lack of interest in family planning discouraged uptake of self-injected DMPA-SC (Sayana Press).
2. Healthcare providers are well positioned to provide adequate education, counselling, and capacity building to prospective users of the self-injected DMPA-SC to encourage acceptance and generate demand.
3. There is need to involve women and youths in governance as against the norm of having just older men occupying political positions.
4. A community cannot fully experience economic growth if the women are sidelined, and women empowerment is a tool for all-round economic growth.
5. Norms shifting is only required for harmful and retrogressive norms, while the positive norms should be upheld and promoted.

Side Event 1a: Future of Health Care in Nigeria; adapting to evolving needs of health consumers

Anchored by Society for Family Health.

1. There is need to leverage positive social norms to improve healthcare outcomes.
2. It is important to make private sector information available in the public domain for improved holistic decision making.

Side Event 1b: Leveraging media to foster Community Participation for behaviour change (Workshop)

Anchored by Nigeria Health Watch.

This workshop required participants to identify the role and power of media in norms shifting.

1. Media tools provide the platform to reach a wider audience, disseminate knowledge aimed at achieving project objectives.
2. To harness the power of media, it is important to analyse and profile the audience, and tailor the best appropriate media option (social media, traditional media - radio, TV or print media)
3. Available community resources can be leveraged to monitor community activities and behaviours. This in turn provides opportunities to improve quality of care and increase demand for good quality healthcare services.
4. Media can be leveraged to identify and debunk erroneous information related to health, as well as amplify the right information so people can make better informed choices.

Side Event 1c: Unmasking the Social Norms that affect the Practice of MNCH, Nutrition and FP Behaviours & Their Effects (Workshop)

Anchored by Breakthrough Action Nigeria.

This workshop brought participants together in a collaborative exercise to uncover and understand harmful social norms linked to MNCH+N/FP. The session focused on specific behaviours, including ANC, breastfeeding, family planning and delivery with a SBA. Workshop participants were grouped, each assigned to explore a specific behaviour.

The group exercise involved exploring the harmful norms, their effects, desired changes and conditions facilitating positive shifts at the community level. Each group was designated a representative to present their findings to the larger group.



Upon synthesis of findings from each group, norms reported are related to mistaken beliefs/myths, biases and lack of agency of women. Additionally, common strategies emerged, underscoring the importance of engaging key stakeholders (husbands, mothers-in-law and community leaders), increase in awareness, empowering women to make informed health decisions, and advocating for policy change as cornerstones for impactful interventions.

The session did not only facilitate a deep understanding of harmful norms related to MNCH+N/FP but also provided clear directions for targeted approaches for sustained positive change - emphasizing community specific solutions.

Highlights from Day 2 2023 Social Norms Conference

Panel 2: From Policy to Practice - Enablers for normative shifts

1. There are several genders-related policies but implementation of such policies is poor.
2. Policies are well disseminated centrally but not at lower levels.
3. Implementation gaps are often as a result of a) misinterpretation of policy by implementers, b) lack of sensitization of policies to the public c) Inadequate involvement of target beneficiaries during the development of policies d) conflicting priorities.
4. A bottom-up approach should be utilised when developing policies instead of a top bottom approach.
5. Policies should be domesticated to enable contextualization.

Panel 3: Our collective cross: Peer support approaches for improving access for women and girls

1. There is a gap in the policy making processes and a need for evidence-based data to inform policy making.
2. There is a need to fully involve community and traditional leaders in policy making to ensure that policies are made bottom up rather than top bottom
3. An evaluation framework (indicator) is attached to a policy document as a guide to track implementation and evaluation.
4. There is a need to decentralize data to make it readily available for researchers and crucial to contextualize data for policies to work.
5. Researchers should look into sharing outputs to better communicate evidence to ensure data availability and easy digestion.

Panel 4: Representation Matters - A Case for Gender Mainstreaming in development programs

1. There should be inclusivity and equity at all stages of program implementation.
2. Gender sensitive language plays a key role in gender mainstreaming.
3. A need for inclusivity in shifting norms to represent all gender, people living with disabilities and people in need of psychosocial support.
4. Federal laws should be domesticated.
5. Local solutions should be developed for local problems

Scientific Session 2a: Champions of Change - For the community, by the community

1. Peer groups and family affect access to health care.
2. To shift norms, health care development is required.
3. Story telling is very important in sharing successful narratives and examples of successful norms shifts.
4. Capacity building of agents of change in the community is vital.

Scientific Session 2b: Norms shifting through active influencer engagement and innovative learning

1. Spousal communication improves women empowerment and good healthcare decisions.
2. Empathy-based trainings should be adopted for major flagship actions to encourage end-user acceptance.

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3. Religious and traditional leaders who are custodians of social norms must be actively involved in the process of norms shifting because of their high impact and influence on people.
 4. Human-centered design approach is the best for all program research as it helps to develop universal solutions, while taking geographical variance into cognizance.

Scientific session 2c: Scientific Session - For the Boys and Girls: Voices and Choices for gender equality and agency

1. Multi-level approaches to GBV programming are essential. This includes; incorporating the CHOICES approach into junior secondary school extracurricular activities, more funding opportunities channelled towards GBV prevention interventions, and promoting gender equity through reflection and community opportunities
2. There is need for further research to explore how to increase positive gender equality beliefs among male adolescents, the need for policy makers to promote inclusive opportunities for both boys and girls, and the societal duty to be mindful in the notions/remarks we make when we interact with younger ones

Panel 5: Financing forward: Normative approaches for advancing women's economic empowerment and inclusion

1. It is important to ensure women empowerment for our collective economic stability.
2. There is need to ensure that women empowerment concepts employed elsewhere fit into the various Nigerian culture and are not just borrowed but are designed and implemented with these nuances in mind.
3. Advocacy is critical in breaking gaps- people need to know the WHY? then the HOW, and WHAT.
4. There is a need for women to be technologically inclined to help the execution of microlending.
5. It is important to ensure that contexts are localized and disseminated in languages peculiar to the communities.
6. There should be a systematic solution rather than a one fit all solution.

Side event 2a: Lets chat: Youth Champions for Equality

1. Identity is a sense of belonging. Everyone likes to think they are in control of their identity however; we go above and beyond for groups we belong to and things we believe in
2. Several norms affect the health and well-being of young people in Nigeria however we can influence youths to make better decisions by:
 - Starting the conversations early
 - Strengthen access to public health on SRH
 - Tailor relevant messages to target issues
 - Create an enabling environment
 - Raise awareness via social media platforms and storytelling
 - Adults should act what they preach

Side event 2b: Social Norms Learning Collaborative, Nigeria - Looking forward

1. Social Norms Learning Collaborative, Nigeria is adding an agency component and will be subsequently known as Social Norms and Agency Learning Collaborative

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2. The scope of the collaborative will expand to other West African anglophone countries (The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone), but Nigeria will continue to facilitate the interactions for the region through SCIDaR.
 3. The expansion of the collaborative to other countries should take into account the:
 - a. Network of its current membership organization
 - b. Fast-paced approach of program implementation in Nigeria
 - c. Need to foster collaborations with other tertiary institutions
 - d. Opportunity medical students provide for long term membership in the collaborative
 - e. Need for synchronization in the efforts put into expanding the collaborative work for maximum results within its base country.
 4. Community engagement needs to be at the front burner as a tool to increase visibility for the Collaborative.