



## **DRIVER 1 TOOLKIT**

# HOW TO CHANGE NORMS IN SUPPORT OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General established the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment in 2016 to bring together leaders from different constituencies—government, civil society, business and international organizations—to launch a shared global agenda that accelerates women's economic participation and empowerment in support of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its promise that no one will be left behind.

The first report of the High-Level Panel (September 2016) examined the case for women's economic empowerment and identified seven drivers for addressing systemic barriers to women's economic empowerment. These seven drivers were further explored by working groups, comprising High-Level Panel members and other stakeholders. Each working group prepared a paper with specific recommendations for transformative change.

The second report of the High Level Panel (March 2017) provided a synthesis of the recommendations of each of the seven working groups within the framework of the essential enabling environment to accelerate and deepen the impact of the seven drivers. In addition to the working group papers, each working group prepared a toolkit, focusing on how to take forward the recommendations of the working group, along with case studies and good practices where relevant.

This toolkit has been prepared by the Working Group for Driver 1—Norms and women's economic empowerment.

Its companion working group paper is published as a separate document.

High-Level Panel reports and working group papers and toolkits are all available online.

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While staff of the Bretton Woods institutions reviewed and provided comments on the working papers and toolkits in their respective areas of expertise, they were not members of the working groups.

In regard to the recommendations aimed at international organizations in these documents, the Bretton Woods institutions may endorse or support them to the extent these are consistent with their roles and in accordance with their mandate.

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## INTRODUCTION

This toolkit provides guidance to actors interested in taking actions on changing norms to improve women's access to decent work and to realize their economic rights. Transforming social and economic norms, though challenging, is possible and effective, with women's grassroots organizations playing a central role in identifying context-relevant strategies and solutions. Norms can change through cultural shifts, economic change, migration, and access to media and communications. Norms can also change through direct interventions, such as policy and programs aiming to change specific norms. And norms can change through social relations, including exposure to and participation in conversations, conflict, social pressure, education and collective efforts.<sup>1</sup>

The focus should be on removing and restricting adverse norms, but support for positive norms is also important.<sup>2</sup> Interventions on norms need to be related to broader goals for reducing poverty and inequality, and they should include challenging structures, not just behaviours. So, it is useful to think of action on norms as myriad interventions, not as one simple solution.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.** Take action to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in their homes, in their communities, in the world of work and in public spaces. Enforcing legal and regulatory frameworks, protocols and disciplinary procedures is critical. So are awareness-raising and violence-prevention campaigns in collaboration with women workers, businesses, trade unions, employer organizations and women's organizations.
- 2. End discrimination and stereotypes that ascribe gender to roles and abilities.** Take action to change discrimination and stereotypes that ascribe gender to roles and abilities including care work, and remove discrimination at the workplace, through education with school-age children, advertising, media, business and civil society groups.

- 3. Eradicate the stigmatization of informal workers.** Governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society should take action to support and recognize informal workers' organizations such as unions, cooperatives and voluntary associations.

## HOW TO GET STARTED?

Transformational changes in norms to support women's economic empowerment are most effective when there is a focus on each of four levels:

- *Individual.* Support people from all genders through critical education and skill training, including negotiation and leadership skills, and through protection from violence, humiliation and harassment.
- *Relationships.* Develop programmes that help individuals explore and balance power in their relationships (such as understanding consent, positive masculinity) and that encourage supportive relationships through positive role models, media initiatives and collective action.
- *Community.* Work with communities and leaders to understand which gendered norms are at play for different groups of women and how the unequal power balance between men and women affects women's economic empowerment. Build communities so that women can then act collectively to force changes in discriminatory laws, policies and practices.
- *Society and the economy.* Develop clear, integrated and coherent policies and ensure the implementation of these policies with adequate financial resources and sufficiently trained human resources. Collaborate with institutions and stakeholders (government, private sector, civil society, academia and women's organizations) and promote structural change (such as working with the media, organizing collective action).

Intervening in norms is inherently contentious. And research into approaches for norms and women's economic empowerment has been limited. So, considering the following principles should be at the forefront of any intervention:

1. Engage local women and grassroots women's organizations directly: nothing for women, without women.
2. Recognize that women are not a homogeneous group suffering from or sharing the same

sets of norms. Norms need to be put in context, and any action to address norms must consider how gender intersects with age, religion, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, disability, mobility and race.

3. Confirm that norm-change interventions are less about individual behaviours and more about economic and social norms. An overt focus on individual behaviours can obscure social, economic and political complexity.<sup>3</sup>

## HOW CAN I BECOME ENGAGED AND ENGAGE AND ACTIVATE MY ORGANIZATION, COMMUNITY AND PEER GROUP?

Here are some examples to get you thinking about how you and your organization can take action on the three recommendations in order to change norms affecting women's economic empowerment.

### RECOMMENDATION 1: ELIMINATE ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS.

Violence constrains a woman's agency physically, socially and psychologically—and restricts her opportunities for becoming economically empowered.<sup>4</sup> Norms can make violence and discrimination against women and girls acceptable.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, efforts for women's economic empowerment should be undertaken in parallel with efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women in their homes, in their communities, in the world of work and in public spaces.

**Facilitate access to resources and assets.** Facilitating access to resources to support women's ability to participate in their communities and societies is fundamental for norms that enable women's economic empowerment. Increasing access to resources can include enacting or supporting policies that provide economic security and protection, enabling legal frameworks and land allocation.

**Reform discriminatory statutory and customary laws.** Many national laws have been changed or created to promote positive norms for women's economic empowerment, in some cases the result of advocacy efforts by women. Also important are laws criminalizing violence against women and addressing discriminatory laws, particularly family laws and access to land and assets.

Although not enforceable in the same way as national laws, international frameworks have a powerful role in shaping norms to support women's economic empowerment. Such international frameworks include:

## Tips to decision-makers on how to facilitate meaningful and sustainable access to resources and assets

- 1 Have the proposed policy and law changes been adequately researched?
- 2 How have women most affected by these changes been involved in the process?
- 3 Has adequate consideration been given to the local socio-economic, political and cultural context? Have all local stakeholders been engaged in the process?
- 4 Have you included women of diverse backgrounds, ethnicity, social status, etc.? Have you included men of diverse backgrounds, ethnicity and social status?
- 5 Is there an adequate campaign implemented to support the adherence to these changes in laws or policies?
- 6 Is there appropriate financial, political and institutional support to sustain these changes? (such as policing and judicial support, financial resources and political will).

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions concerning decent work for vulnerable women workers, including the ILO–Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and ILO–Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177).

These frameworks can be tools in the hands of women workers and their representative organizations to advocate for legal change in their countries. For example, affiliates of the International Domestic Workers Federation successfully invoked Convention 189 in advocating for progressive national policies on domestic work.<sup>6</sup> Legal protection from violence is also increasing. *Women, Business and the Law 2016* found that the number of economies introducing laws addressing domestic violence has risen sharply over the last 25 years, from close to zero to 118, driven by international and regional human rights conventions and campaigns.

**Prevent violence in the workplace.** The private sector can also challenge and change norms affecting women's economic empowerment. Specific policies can be set around reporting and

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“Unless we are organized, we cannot change the mindsets of people.”

Homeworker, SEWA Embroidery Centre, Rajivnagar, East Delhi, India

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dealing with harassment and violence in the workplace, promoting norms around the flexibility and support for care work and supporting women leaders. For example, some businesses in India, to help women enter formal employment, meet with the women’s families and husbands to show them the workplace and dispel any myths they may have about the women going outside of the home.

Male Champions of Change, set up by the Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner from the Australian Human Rights Commission, now involves more than 90 male business leaders who have committed to tackling adverse norms women face in the workplace. Their commitments include setting business targets where gender equality is a priority of business; investing capital, time and human resources to achieve gender equality in the workplace; and taking action on domestic and family violence as a workplace issue.

**Promote economic security.** Policies and programs that promote economic security and protection can support changes in norms. Governments and employers can support gendered norm change and address inequality by providing economic protections such as a minimum wage, and by mandating equal pay for work of equal value and paid maternity, paternity and parental leave. Cash transfers and basic income are also examples of providing a subsistence wage unconditionally and regularly to individuals. For example, a universal basic income trial carried out in rural India by UNICEF and the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) found that economic security from the basic income changed and sustained norms promoting women’s economic empowerment.<sup>7</sup>

## **RECOMMENDATION 2: END DISCRIMINATION AND STEREOTYPES THAT ASCRIBE GENDER TO ROLES AND ABILITIES**

**Identify and support positive role models.** Through exposure to alternative stories and examples of women’s economic empowerment, role models can challenge adverse norms and show that other ways are possible:

- Plan’s International’s Economic Security Innovation Hub with over 1,000 respondents showed that the most appropriate and effective role models are often those immediate to women and girls, such as women leaders in the communities where girls and young women

## **Media and norm change**

The TV, print, radio and social media have important social roles in changing adverse norms and supporting positive norms toward women’s economic empowerment. The media have a unique role in informing populations about adverse norms, while also communicating and affirming positive narratives that support women’s economic empowerment. For example, the Women in News Project, supported by the Graca Machel Trust, has committed to rewriting affirming narratives about women and children in the media. Moreover, media organizations, as businesses, can address internal norms by reviewing how they conduct themselves as a workplace. This internal functioning is important, since norms internal to the business shape the external messaging a media organization implicitly or directly promotes.

## **Men and norm change**

There are programs that have successfully targeted men’s norms to change, involving the use of male role models to promote particular norms. The Brazilian organization Promundo developed a program to advocate gender equitable practices such as men being caregivers. Simultaneously, the program helped men challenge the acceptability of violence against women.<sup>10</sup> The program weakens negative norms and promotes new descriptive norms by working with men to assess their attitudes and training them to diffuse messages throughout the community. A self-evaluation of this project showed that a significantly higher proportion of respondents supported gender equitable ideas at six months and one year post intervention, compared with the control group.<sup>11</sup>

live or family members and women who took a different path and succeeded.

- The Indian Panchayati Raj Act mandated an increase of women in local government from 5 percent in 1993 to 40 percent by 2005. The impact of the increase in women leaders changed male’s acceptance of women as leaders and provided women with more confidence

## Tips on how to identify and use positive role models

- 1 Who would be the most appropriate role model—local community member, community leader, a particular group or organization, a celebrity or high-profile person?
- 2 Have you included women of diverse backgrounds, ethnicity and social status? Have you included men of diverse backgrounds, ethnicity and social status?
- 3 Which media can the role model leverage? TV? Radio? Print? Social media?
- 4 How can you support the role model to increase the uptake and sustainability of norm change? Through access to resources? Changes in laws and policies? Collective action and organizing? A campaign?

that they could run for public office. In some locations, these female role models affected girls' personal aspirations and parents' career aspirations for their daughters.<sup>8</sup>

- In Tanzania, Oxfam aired a daily TV programme highlighting the work of women farmers in the search for a “female food hero,” which allowed viewers to explore the unique challenges that women face in becoming farmers. The programme challenged the image of farming as a male role.<sup>9</sup> Such an example shows the possibilities of targeting norm change on a population through the media.
- Various groups have started campaigns to change the norm of “manels,” or all-male or male-dominated panels, to ensure the adequate representation of women in conferences and in the media. Beginning to gain momentum are #SayNoToManels and #AllMalePanels on social media, as well as public databases of women speakers and pledges by male leaders to say no to participating in all male panels.

## Encourage critical education and public deliberation.

Critical education and public deliberation can be ways to change adverse norms. For example, community discussions can be led by local people to encourage reflection, alternative views and avenues for change around restrictive norms. In India, local grassroots groups used critical education to challenge not just patriarchal norms but also to push back against structures of class, ethnicity, caste, religion and race relations that oppressed marginalized women workers.<sup>12</sup>

## The private sector and norm change

Unilever has an array of initiatives for gender equality in the workplace, including policies to remove all adverse norms in their advertising campaigns, promoting gender balance in their workforce, developing women as leaders, reforming recruitment processes to remove gender bias, offering flexible and agile working to support care work and providing support for new and future parents. Businesses should also be encouraged to go beyond their internal functioning to examine how their work affects women's economic empowerment up and down the value chain. This includes procuring services from women-owned enterprises and addressing the social, ecological and economic impacts of their businesses through ordinary market competition.

## Tips to community organisers on how to engage with critical education and public deliberation

- 1 Are women engaged and leading the content of discussions? Are their views adequately considered?
- 2 Have you included women of diverse backgrounds, ethnicity and social status?
- 3 How are these discussions held? Informally in a local setting? In conversations? In workshops? Or through a national campaign?
- 4 What is the scale of the deliberation? Is it at a local level through conversations and initiatives or larger through media campaigns and nationwide consultations?
- 5 If the deliberative process is led by government, how open is government to implementing the outcome?
- 6 What support can go alongside the deliberative process to increase the uptake and sustainability of norm change? Access to resources? Changes in laws and policies? Collective action and organizing? A media campaign? A responsive police force and judiciary?



### Tips on how to use education in schools to change norms

- 1 Is the focus a curriculum-wide change or a series of workshops?
- 2 Is the content of the workshop researched and supported by evidence?
- 3 Does the intervention engage students?
- 4 How can young people be involved to help deliver the training?
- 5 Are the teachers and trainers adequately trained and supported?
- 6 What support can go alongside the education programs to increase the uptake and sustainability of norm change? Access to resources? Changes in laws and policies? Collective action and organizing? A campaign?

Women mobilizing in grassroots groups adopted feminist popular-education strategies that created new spaces for women to collectivize around shared experiences of poverty, exclusion, and discrimination; critically analyse the structures and ideologies that sustained and reinforced their oppression; and raise consciousness of their own sense of subordination.<sup>13</sup> Critical education is also an avenue for women affected by particular norms to decide the best way to go about changing them, often collectively. Some women have a very real threat of sanctions—through shame, humiliation or physical violence.

**Engaging with adverse norms and stereotypes in schools.** For gendered norm change in school-age children, targeted programs in schools can

tackle adverse norms. For example, the Gender Equity Movement in Schools, piloted in Mumbai and later expanded in Maharashtra state, India, helps male and female students ages 12–14 adopt more gender-equitable norms. Activities include role-playing games, interactive extracurricular activities and critical reflection-centred lessons that explore topics like pursuing higher education, delaying marriage, reducing gender-based violence and promoting more equitable sharing of household tasks with men and boys. After two years of implementation among 8,000 students, “participating students were more likely to support higher education for girls, openly express opposition to gender-based violence and champion delaying marriage.”<sup>14</sup>

### RECOMMENDATION 3: ERADICATE THE STIGMATIZATION OF INFORMAL WORKERS

**Organizing and exercising collective action.** Women coming together through organizing and exercising collective agency is very important for norm change at both an individual and societal level. For example, organizing can provide a strong sense of collective identity and self-worth for some women workers, especially informal or agricultural workers, who may perceive their own work to be unproductive or of little value due to norms. At a societal level, when marginalized women workers are organized, they increase their visibility and their ability to be recognized as legitimate economic agents. Unions are important for organizing formal employees to take action on adverse norms in the workplace.

Informal women workers and agricultural women workers can organize in membership-based organizations to engage in advocacy and in cooperatives or producer groups to pool resources and increase their bargaining power. Strengthening both types of organizations is critical to challenge the stigmatization of the informal economy and eliminate discriminatory practices against women agricultural workers. Equally critical is the need for governments and international organizations to create platforms for informal workers and agricultural workers to exercise influence over the policymaking and rule-setting processes that affect their livelihoods.

In India, SEWA has organized nearly 2 million members, all poor women working in the informal economy. It pursues a joint strategy of collective bargaining, negotiations, campaigns and advocacy, and direct interventions and services of various kinds. And it works on multiple levels to change restrictive norms. For example, through national and transnational advocacy efforts,

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“I am a shoe-maker and I have been with SEWA four years. I came to know about it through a meeting in a nearby temple held by a SEWA organizer. But I was too scared of my husband to come to meetings openly, and so I came secretly, without permission. Now I am an elected representative of the workers. I get a lot of information and ideas from the SEWA organizers, and I have been to far away cities such as Ahmedabad and Bhopal. And now my husband cannot speak just as he likes. I told him ‘I can leave you but I cannot leave SEWA!’ He tried to stop me from sitting at the market to sell the shoes but I said, ‘I fought so hard for this, I’m not going to give it up now’.”

Home-based worker who has become an elected leader, or Aagewan, in SEWA, Delhi

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## Tips on how to support collective action

- 1 Are marginalized women at the centre of the collective action process? How can they lead the process?
- 2 Have you included women of diverse backgrounds, ethnicity and social status? Have you included men of diverse backgrounds, ethnicity and social status?
- 3 What are the outcomes the action aims to achieve? Change a specific law? Distribute resources? Clarity of goals is important.
- 4 What resources (financial and political) have been mobilized to support the action?
- 5 How will the campaign be communicated to all those involved? Communication can keep momentum going and avoid having the campaign redirected for others' purposes.

SEWA has been instrumental in gaining rights and recognition for informal workers. SEWA's community-level efforts to organize women have also been transforming internalized norms and family and community dynamics. At the UN HLP Consultation, "Women's Voices from the Informal Economy," SEWA members described a change in their sense of self-worth and confidence after joining a collective effort through SEWA. For many of the women, their individual change was followed by shifts in norms in the family and even in the community.<sup>15</sup>

Organizing and collective action often preclude women's broader social empowerment and participation in other areas of life. For example, in Sudan, ADD International ran an 18-month project to build the capacity of associations of women informal workers with disabilities—to empower their members to take on leadership roles that had traditionally been seen as male. A key part of this was strengthening links between women with disabilities and the rest of the women's movement. The associations of women with disabilities built a partnership with the Sudanese Women's Union and engaged in joint advocacy. Following this action, one provincial state government went on to include a specific focus on disability in its public campaign on gender-based violence.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here is a list of useful resources about norm changes that support women's economic empowerment.

- Alexander-Scott, M., E. Bell and J. Holden (2016). *Shifting Social Norms to Tackle Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)*. DFID Guidance Note. London: VAWG Helpdesk.
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- Elster, J. 1989. "Social Norms and Economic Theory." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 3(4): 99–117.
- United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment (with Tyson, L., and J. Klugman). 2016. *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment*. New York: United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.
- Hughes, C. 2016. *Guidance Note: Social Norms for the Worldwide Influencing Network (WIN) Campaign to Eliminate VAWG*. Oxfam Canada, Oxfam and VAWG/GBV Knowledge Hub.
- IMF (International Monetary Fund). 2017. *Women, Work, and Economic Growth: Leveling the Playing Field*. Washington, DC: IMF.
- Kidder, T., D. Bright, and C. Green. 2014. *Meaningful Action: Effective Approaches to Women's Economic Empowerment in Agriculture*. Oxfam Background Report. Oxford: Oxfam UK.
- Mackie, G., F. Moneti, H. Shakya, and E. Denny. 2015. *What Are Social Norms? How Are They Measured?* San Diego, AC: UNICEF and the University of California, Center for Global Justice.
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"As you acquire more learning, more experience, you have less fear in advocating. This learning empowered me to gain this knowledge, argue in other spaces and know how to listen and how to demand."

Marcelina Bautista, former General Secretary, CONLACTRAHO, Latin America

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- World Bank. 2014. *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity*. Washington DC, World Bank.

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3. Gershon, I. 2011. “Neoliberal Agency.” *Current Anthropology* 52(4): 537–555.
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5. For more on the link between violence against women and women’s economic empowerment, see the this toolkit’s companion working group paper.
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May 2012. Compared with women in villages that did not receive the universal basic income, women who received regular payments were able to develop their capabilities, as they were able to invest this capital into economic and social activities that increased their own income (and that of their household) by up to 16 percent. Moreover, the trial reported changes to gendered decision-making roles in households where, in the baseline data, 71 percent of women said household decisions were made by the household head, but after the trial only 53 percent still said this was true.

8. United Nations Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment (with Tyson, L. and J. Klugman). 2016. *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment*. New York: United Nations Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment.
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14. Alexander-Scott, M., E. Bell, and J. Holden. 2016. *DFID Guidance Note: Shifting Social Norms to Tackle Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)*. London: VAWG Helpdesk, p. 29.
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