On the CUSP of change:

Effective scaling for social norms change programming for gender equality.

Community for Understanding Scale Up (CUSP)

Who we are?

Puntos
de encuentro
para la transformación
de la vida cotidiana

OXFAM

WE CAN
End ALL violence against women

Institute for
Reproductive Health
Georgetown University

Tostan
Dignity for All

CEDOVIP
Center for Domestic
Violence Prevention

SONKE
GENDER
JUSTICE
HIV/AIDS • GENDER EQUALITY • HUMAN RIGHTS

Salamander Trust
ON THE RIGHT(S) TRACK

IMAGE
Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS Gender and Equity

Raising Voices

Why we came together?

All of us have created initiatives that are now being scaled up

- Collectively we believe social norms change is key to address gender equality, including SRH&R and violence against women and girls

Our methodologies and initiatives are:

- being used by many other groups
- often included as recommended programming in large funding calls
- regularly being used in ways that they were not originally designed for

Photo credit: Salamander Trust

Photo credit: Institute for Reproductive Health

These experiences brought us together to consider our responsibility as developers of these initiatives to guide quality programming and responsible scale up.

Big Question

As a field, the big question:

- How do we go to scale? How do we reach more people with effective programming?

CUSP Working Group challenges:

- How can existing initiatives be effectively and responsibily scaled up?
- How can innovation be encouraged while maintaining the principles and elements of effective social norms approaches?

The context:

- Evidence base for programming to change social norms to achieve gender equality, including SRH&R and violence prevention, has grown
- Growing recognition that social norms change programming is critical

However:

- Emphasis on RCTs as the only valid way of measuring impact
- In scale up, numbers alone can come to dominate
- Numbers focus undermines human rights based approach to development: de-emphasis for politicized social justice work and increased focus on technocratic approaches
- And more often, existing programs being taken to scale, less innovation

As a field, we need to learn how to scale the aspects of programming that makes them effective: values and principles

Starting at the beginning:

Why use a social norms change approach?

- Social norms are shared beliefs about what is typical and socially acceptable among a group of people
- Social norms shape and give order and meaning to our lives - they can be oppressive or freeing, confining or inclusive
- VAWG and gender inequality is sustained by norms that embody unequal gender power relations
- Shifting these norms rooted in power dynamics requires time and in-depth work to understand the social context
- The social norms change approach is inclusive and builds on community strengths as opposed to using negative messaging and instilling fear

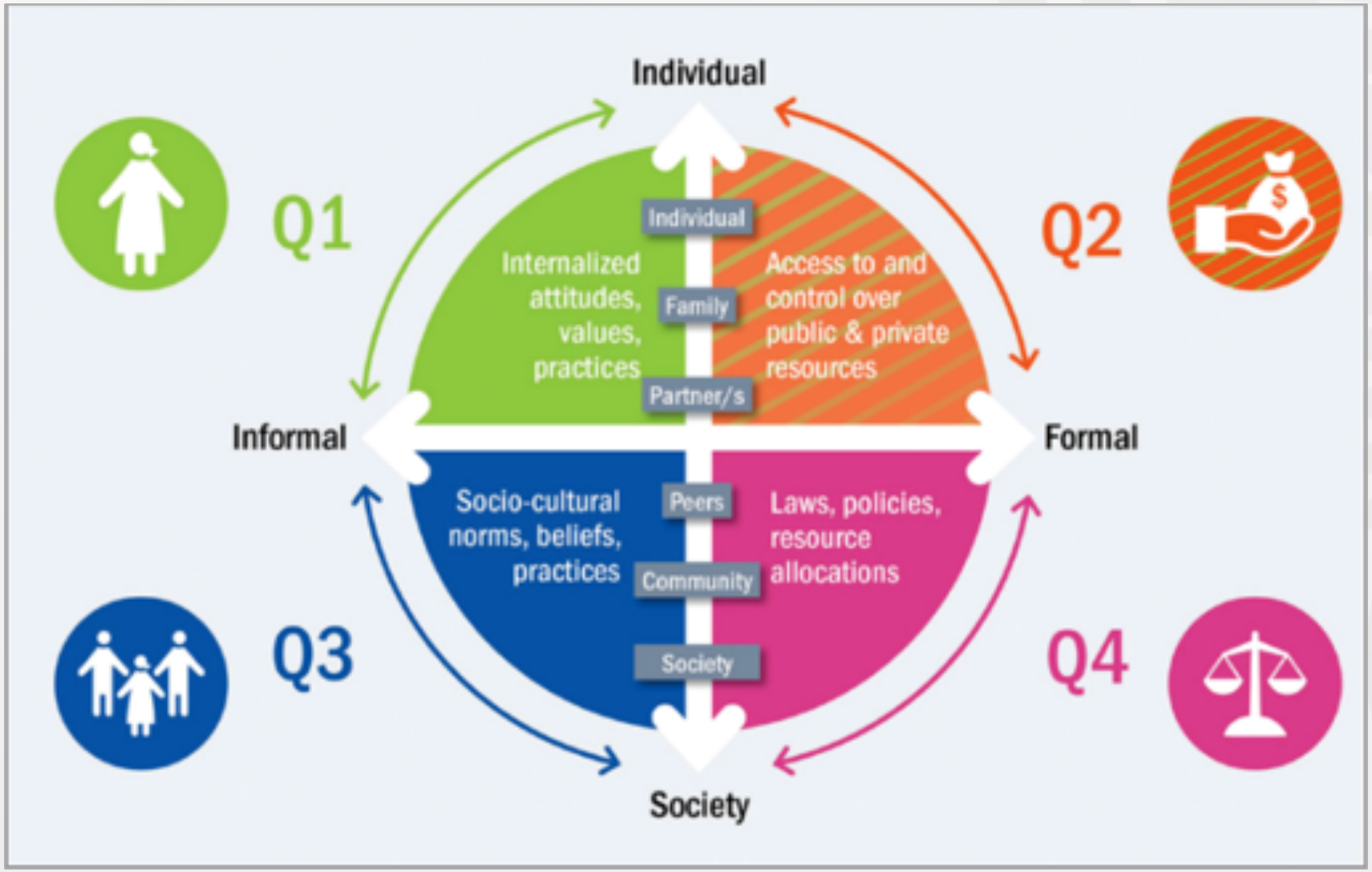
Photo credit: Institute for Reproductive Health

CUSP's approach to social norms change

- We strive to shift social norms through aspirational and strengths-oriented approaches
- Developing the capacity of all people in all their diversities
- Envisioning a collective future where hope is based on people's own lived and gendered experiences
- Supporting communities to develop social norms change from within
- Identifying and building on community strengths, critically examining harmful behaviour, supporting positive change

Photo credit: Heidi Brady / Raising Voices

Working across a range of groups, perspectives and contexts to reach critical mass or the ‘tipping point’



UNAIDS et al 2017

Social norms change theory and strategies need to address factors operating at multiple levels of inter-dependent complexities to create new beliefs and practices within a reference network.

This is when social change can happen.

Taking social norms change approaches to scale – no silver bullet

- Many groups recognize the need for **sustained, holistic, integrated and multisectoral approaches** to address **complex problems**
- However current models often
  - limit investment to evidence-based programs
  - are shortened, scaled down versions of evidence-based programs
  - include a mix and match of evidence-based programs
- This affects possibilities for both **effective programming of existing approaches** and **innovation for new approaches**

Photo credit: Institute for Reproductive Health

Scaling existing initiatives: key lessons

- Sufficient time for NGOs to internalize a program approach
- Maintain fidelity to core principles
- Create a strong foundation
- Engage program developers
- Think beyond numbers
- Get personal
- Adapt and evolve
- Support innovation

Supporting innovation: scaling of principles

Do no harm

Work across the ecological model and change matrix

Use an intersectional, gender-power analysis

Ensure sustained commitment

Support theory and evidence-informed innovations

Promote personal and collective critical reflection

Support and invest in staff and community facilitators

Further reading

On the CUSP of Change:
Effective scaling of social norms programming for gender equality

Overview

Over the past 10 years, the evidence base on the effectiveness of programs focused on changing social norms to achieve gender equality has grown. A number of approaches and methodologies demonstrate significant impact in preventing violence against women and girls (VAWG) and in advancing women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Activists, organizations, governments, researchers, and donors now want to know how best to scale up these initiatives to reach more communities and increase sustainable impact. This is a critical moment, rich with opportunity. It also comes with risks and challenges.

In this brief, we provide practical insights and advice for programmers, funders, researchers, and policymakers as they take social norms programming to scale. Drawing on our broad and diverse experiences globally as practitioners and activists, we also highlight key challenges embedded in social norms change work and ways to overcome them. Most importantly, we suggest that effectively transforming harmful social norms at scale requires moving beyond the current thinking of scale as a numbers exercise to better reflect key principles from social norms change work. At this critical moment, we encourage the international development community to: 1) ensure that gendered, social justice principles and values are prioritized when programming at scale; and, 2) support innovation of new social norms change approaches that also reflect these principles. We believe that embracing this approach while prioritizing the agency, well-being and safety of communities is essential to achieving impact and ensuring sustainability.

Who we are

The Community for Understanding Scale Up (CUSP) working group was borne out of informal discussions between Raising Voices (author of SASA!) and Salamander Trust (author of *Stepping Stones*), about the opportunities and challenges that emerge when external groups scale up our respective methodologies. Recognizing our shared experiences, we invited seven other organizations from across three continents to join us, each of which has designed social norms change initiatives for preventing VAWG and improving SRHR. Most of us have, or will be, working with other stakeholders across the globe to scale up these approaches (see page 12 for organizational summaries of CUSP members).

Community for Understanding Scale up (CUSP)

A call to action

CUSP's vision is for the scale up of social norms change programming to remain grounded in **gendered, social justice principles** both when taking existing programs to scale and embarking on new innovations.

We call for **longer-term funding and planning**, commitment to **do no harm**, a deeper **investment in people**, engagement with **communities as equals** with **hope and optimism.**

JOIN US ON THE CUSP