WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS SHORT GUIDE?

Our 4th guide offers an example of a corrupt behavior driven by a social norm. It identifies the components of the norm and explains how the norm differs from other social dynamics.

If new to social norms, we recommend first reading short guides:

#1 Social Norms and Corruption: An Overview
#3 How Are Social Norms Different.
Section 46 of Uganda’s Anti-Corruption Act mandates that any public servant convicted of corruption must be removed from the state payroll and pension. However, this administrative sanction is rarely implemented. Convicted individuals continue to be paid or receive a pension, even while serving their sentence in prison.

See: Understanding the Underlying Values, Norms and Behaviors Constraining the Implementation of Administrative Sanction in the Ugandan Public Service.
MONTH 1: PETER, THE NEW GUY

Peter is a civil servant who has recently transferred to the Public Service Commission. In his new role, he is responsible for removing public servants who have been convicted of corruption from payroll or pension.

Peter sees that the way his colleagues process files typically does not follow official procedure. In fact, the process they use actually delays action.
MONTH 2: PETER’S FIRST CASE

Peter’s first case involves Kolo, who was convicted of accepting bribes when he worked for the Ministry of Transportation. Since Kolo was convicted, he is supposed to be removed from the government payroll.

Peter feels unsure how to handle his first case due to the differences between official procedure and what he has observed. Eager to fit-in with his new colleagues, Peter reaches out to team members for advice.
One of Peter’s colleagues explains: “Files can always be lost or delayed; processes can always be forgotten. You should be wary of how your actions may lead to serious consequences for yourself.”

As the conversation concludes, Peter hesitantly puts Kolo’s file into his drawer. Peter’s colleagues gently nod at him and walk away.
SOCIAL NORMS ARE MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS HELD ‘BY A GROUP’

In this case, the reference group is Peter’s colleagues in the administrative department who have a role in processing files related to administrative sanctions. This includes peers as well as those in a supervisory capacity.
SOCIAL NORMS ARE MADE UP OF COMMONLY HELD BELIEFS IN THE GROUP

A **descriptive norm** is a belief about what others in the group do. The majority of Peter’s team believe that other bureaucrats involved in the enforcement of Section 46 find ways to avoid moving the file forward (e.g. inaction, excessive consultation etc.).

An **injunctive norm** is a belief about what others in a group approve and disapprove of. Most civil servants involved in the group believe that their peers expect them to find avenues to help convicted civil servants avoid removal from payroll.
WHAT ARE THE REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS?

**Reward:** Peter is new and wants to fit in and be accepted by his new colleagues.

**Punishment:** Peter’s conversation suggests that if he doesn’t follow the social norm, others may perceive him as someone who doesn’t know how to behave properly and therefore can’t be counted on.
WHAT IS THE SOCIAL NORM?

Adding it all together, the social norm that Peter is experiencing is:

Those responsible for processing administrative sanctions where Peter works are expected by their peers to find avenues within official procedures to help colleagues avoid punishment.

Remember, one cannot tell if a social norm is driving a corrupt behavior from a single example. In this case, CJL used participatory methods with civil servants to gather sufficient information to understand if the behavior was typical and deemed appropriate across the team.
### Attitude:
A person’s beliefs or judgements (e.g. favor/disfavor) about something or someone.

While Peter refrained from initiating the process to remove a convicted civil servant from the payroll (his behavior), he does not think that it is something they should be doing (his attitude).

### Behavior:
What people actually do.

The desire to be a trusted part of his new team and his concern about the possible consequences of deviating weighs strongly on his mind. In this case, the social norm overrode Peter’s individual attitude toward following the Anti-Corruption Act.

### Moral:
Deeply held inner convictions that help people decide what is right or wrong.

Peter does not see corruption in moral or amoral terms. It is the way his world works which is different from his inner convictions.
How does the social norm differ from . . .

**Convention:**
A convention is a common pattern of behavior people engage in; normal behavior.

Peter’s act of forgoing the initiation of the sanction was not because it was convenient for him or that it met his needs. If that was the case, this would have been a convention.

Peter’s actions were driven by the social pressure or mutual expectation to act in a certain way backed by the fear of punishment on failure to do so.

**Culture:**
Culture encompasses patterns of behavior, social institutions, attitudes, norms, values, language, etc., that are characteristic of a given group and are socially transmitted.

This social norm is part of the larger culture in Uganda, but it is not synonymous.
FOR MORE ABOUT SOCIAL NORMS AND CORRUPTION:

The report this example came from:

CJL’s report on how social norms are constraining the implementation of the Ugandan Administrative Act

CJL’s third short guide for practitioners: How are Social Norms different?

CJL’s comprehensive reference guide for understanding Social Norms
WHAT IS THE CORRUPTION, JUSTICE AND LEGITIMACY PROGRAM?

The Corruption, Justice, and Legitimacy (CJL) Program is a research-to-practice initiative committed to improving the effectiveness of anti-corruption programming in contexts of endemic corruption. The program has developed a systems-based approach to corruption analysis that empowers practitioners to see the interconnected nature of drivers and enablers of corruption. After testing the approach in several fragile states, CJL realized that more effective responses would also require more insight into the conflict, peacebuilding, and corruption nexus along with greater practical guidance on how to integrate social norms into programming.

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THE CORRUPTION IN FRAGILE STATES BLOG

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